

Selected Lives of Saints

July and August

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The Orthodox reverence of Saints

During baptism, a person is given a name in honor of one of the saints, who from that moment becomes his heavenly patron. Each Orthodox Christian should know the “life” — the history—of his heavenly patron and turn to him in prayer for help and guidance. Our devout ancestors tried to commemorate the day of their saint’s memory —“the angel’s day” — by partaking of the Holy Communion and celebrating this day more festively than their birthday.

What is the meaning of the orthodox reverence of the holy servants of God? Do the saints in Heaven know of our needs and difficulties and are they interested in us? Do they hear our prayers to them and do they try to help us? Indeed should we turn to saints for help, or is it enough to pray only to the Lord God? Sectarians, who have lost the apostolic traditions, do not understand the essence and purpose of Christ’s Church and thus deny the necessity of prayers to the saints in Heaven. We will briefly outline herein the Orthodox teaching concerning this.

Orthodox reverence of the holy servants of God comes from the conviction that all of us, those seeking salvation or those already saved, living and dead, form **a single family of God.** The Church — is a great society, encompassing the visible and invisible world. It — is a huge, universal organization, built on the principle of love, in which each member must care not only

about himself, but about the well-being and salvation of others. Saints — are those people, which during their life more than others expressed love to others.

We, orthodox, believe that, when a righteous person dies, he does not sever his ties with the Church, but crosses over to its higher, heavenly domain — into **the Church triumphant**. Once in the spiritual world, the soul of the righteous person does not stop thinking, wanting, feeling. Just the opposite, these characteristics are revealed more fully and completely.

Modern non-Orthodox Christians, having lost the active connection with the heavenly-earthly Church, have the most vague and contradicting ideas concerning the afterlife. Some of them think, that after death the soul of the person falls asleep and is as though shut off from everything; others — that the soul of a person, even if it continues its activity after death, does not concern itself with the world which it has departed. Others — that as a matter of principle one should not pray to saints, because a Christian has direct association with God.

What is the teaching of the Holy Scriptures concerning the righteous who have departed the earthly world, and the power of their prayers? In apostolic times the Church was considered as **one** Heavenly/earthly spiritual **family**. The Apostle Paul wrote to newly-converted Christians: *“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect”* (Heb. 12:22-23). In other words, you, by becoming Christians, have joined a great family and come into close association with the heavenly world and with the righteous who are found therein. The parting words of the Apostle Peter — *“Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance”* — (2 Peter 1:15) — clearly attest to the fact that he promises to continue to care about them from that spiritual world.

The ancient practice of turning to the holy martyrs and servants of God for help is based on the recognition of the active association of the Heavenly/earthly Church and on the basis of faith in the power of prayer.

We know that not all, but only the most zealous and devout persons did God during their lifetime call His friends, and glorified them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and miracles. Thus, Christ told the apostles at the Last Supper: *“Ye are my friends!... For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother”* (John 15:14-15; Mt. 12:50). The sacred history presents many examples of spiritual closeness, or “audacity,” of the saints with God. For example, Abraham asks God to have mercy on the citizens of Sodom and Gomorra, and God was willing to fulfill his request, if there were at least 10 righteous persons found there. Another time God rescinded his punishment of Abimelech, king of Gerar, by the prayers of Abraham (Gen. Chap. 18, Gen. Chap. 20). The Bible relates, that God spoke with the Prophet Moses face to face, *“as a man speaketh unto his friend.”* When Miriam, the sister of Moses, sinned and was punished with leprosy, Moses attained forgiveness for her from the Lord through prayer (Ex. 33:11; Numbers Chap. 12). Other examples can also be presented about the particular strength of the prayers of God’s servants.

The saints themselves do not overshadow God and do not weaken the need to turn to Him as the Heavenly Father. For even grown members of the family do not lessen the authority of the parents, when they care for their children together. Even more so: nothing pleases a parent more, than seeing how older brothers care for the younger. In similar fashion, our Heavenly Father rejoices, when the saints pray for us and try to help us. The holy servants of God possess a stronger faith than we, and are closer to God by their righteousness. For this reason we will turn to them as to our **older brothers**, appearing at the throne of the Almighty for us.

It is noteworthy that the righteous, while still **living** on earth, saw and knew much that was inaccessible to normal perception. Even more so should these gifts be inherent in them, when they, free from their mortal body, have passed on to the higher world. The Apostle Peter, for example, saw what was occurring in Ananias' soul; the illegal act of his servant Giezia was revealed to Elisha and, what is more amazing, all the secret plans of the Syrian court were revealed to him, which he later related to the King of Israel. The saints, finding themselves on earth, penetrated the higher world with their spirit, and some saw hosts of angels, others earned the right to see the image of God (Isaiah, Ezekiel), others were transported to the third Heaven and heard secret indescribable words there, for example, the Apostle Paul. Even more so, being in Heaven, they are more capable of knowing what is happening on earth and of hearing those who turn to them, since the saints in Heaven are "*equal to the angels*" (Acts 5:3; 4 Kingdom Chapter 4; 4 Kingdoms 6:12; Luke 20:36). From the parable of the Lord about the rich man and Lazarus we find out, that Abraham, being in Heaven, could hear the cry of the rich man, suffering in hell, the "*great gulf*" dividing them notwithstanding. The words of Abraham: your brothers have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them — clearly show, that Abraham knows the life of the Hebrew nation, occurring after his death, knows of Moses and his law, about the prophets and their writings. The spiritual vision of the souls of the righteous in Heaven, without doubt, is greater than it was on earth. The Apostle writes: "*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known*" (1 Cor. 13:12).

The nearness of the saints to God's throne and the power of their prayers for the faithful existing on the earth, is obvious from the book of Revelations, in which the Apostle John writes: "*And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.*" Later he describes the vision of the righteous in Heaven, praying for the people suffering on earth: "*And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand*" (Rev. 5:11; 8:3-4).

Great is the power of prayer! "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,*" taught the Apostle James (Jam. 5:16). Praying for another is an expression of love for him; and the saints in Heaven, praying for us, show us their brotherly love and care.

In the Gospel and other New Testament books we find numerous examples witnessing the power of prayer for other people. Thus, for example, by request of the nobleman, the Lord healed his son; by request of the Canaanite woman her daughter was freed from the demon; by request of a father the Lord healed his possessed son; and by request of his friends — He forgave and healed the sick of the palsy, whom they lowered from the roof with ropes; by the faith of the Roman centurion, his servant was healed (John 4:46-53; Mat. 15:21-23; Mark 9:17-25; Mark 2:2-25; Mat. 8:5-13). In addition, the Lord performed most of the miraculous healings at a distance, in absentia.

In this way, if the prayers of simple people have such strength, then even more powerful are the prayers of the righteous, standing before the throne of God. "*And this is the confidence that we have in him (the Son of God), that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us,*" -- urges us the beloved pupil of Christ (1 John 5:14).

This is why the Church from the very earliest times contained teachings about the benefits of prayerful appeal to the saints. This we see, for example, from ancient liturgies and other literary monuments. In the liturgy of the Apostle James we read: “Especially we perform the memory of the Holy and Glorious Evervirgin, Blessed Mother of God. Remember Her, Lord God, and by Her pure and holy prayers spare and have mercy on us.” Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, in describing the Liturgy of the church of Jerusalem, notes: “Then we remember (in the Liturgy) those deceased earlier, firstly, -- the patriarchs, the prophets, apostles, martyrs, so that through their prayers and intercessions God would accept our prayers.”

There are numerous accounts of the Fathers and teachers of the Church, particularly beginning with the 4th century, of the Church’s reverence of the saints. But even from the beginning of the second century there is direct evidence of ancient Christian writings of faith in the prayers of the saints in Heaven about their brothers on earth. Witnesses of the martyrdom of St. Ignatius the God-Bearer (beginning in the second century) say “Returning home in tears, we conducted an all-night vigil... Later, dozing off, some of us saw the blessed Ignatius suddenly arisen, embracing us, and others also saw him praying for us.” Similar notes containing mentions of prayers and intercessions for us by martyrs are contained in other writings from the era of persecutions on Christians.

The determination of the holiness of the dead person is confirmed by special evidence, such as: martyrdom for Christ, fearless espousal of their faith, selfless service to the Church, the gift of healing. Particularly, when the Lord confirms the holiness of the dead person through miracles after their death upon praying to them.

Besides the help of the saints through prayer, they help us attain salvation through the example of their own life. The familiarity with the lives of the saints enriches the Christian with the spiritual experience of those, who more zealously than others embodied the Gospel in their life. Here are so many clear examples of living faith, courage, patience. Being persons like ourselves, and overcoming the most difficult temptations, they inspire us to patiently and uncomplainingly carry out our path of life.

The Apostle James called upon Christians to imitate the patience of the ancient prophets and Job the Long-suffering, to acquire strong faith, like the prophet Elijah. The Apostle Peter taught Christian wives to take the example of modesty and obedience from the righteous Sarah, Abraham’s wife. The Holy Apostle Paul presents the feats of the ancient righteous, beginning with Abel and ending with the Maccabees, and urges Christians to imitate them. In the conclusion of his thorough teaching on this theme he writes: “*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us*” (James 5th chapter; 1 Peter 3:6; Heb. 12:1).

The Lord said: “*Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven*” (Matt. 5:15-16). Saints — are bright stars, showing us the way to the Heavenly Kingdom.

Let us treasure the closeness to God of God’s holy servants and turn to them for help, remembering that they love us and concern themselves with our salvation. Familiarity with the lives of the saints is particularly important in our time, when the general mass of “Christians” of the most varied direction has become so trivialized and the understanding of the Christian ideal has been distorted.

Saint Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow

July 16 and January 22 (July 3 and January 9 old calendar).

The victorious period in the history of our motherland (conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan kingdoms in the middle of the 16th century) was followed by hard times for the Russian people. After the death of his gentle and humble wife Anastasia, tsar Ivan Vasilievich lapsed into gloomy cruelty. Suspicious of treason, he surrounded himself with bodyguards called “oprichniks.” He made several towns and some Moscow streets his personal fiefdom and elite stronghold (these were called “oprichnina” as opposed to other towns and streets called “zemshchina”). The tsar’s bodyguards shamelessly inflicted all kinds of plunder and offences on the peaceful citizens without any reprimand. It was during these hard times for Russia, that Prelate Philip performed his feat of self-sacrifice.

Saint Philip (Feodor before joining the church) came from a noble family of the Klychevs. His father, Stepan Ivanovich Klychev, was a boyarin (nobleman) favored by the tsar. His wife Varvara was a god-fearing woman, and Feodor was their first-born child. Since early childhood Feodor, according to his biographer, “studied sacred theological books with devoted ardor in his heart;” he was humble and staid, and shunned entertainment. Due to his noble origin he often visited the palace of tsar Ivan, who was of the same age as Feodor. The tsar was much impressed by Feodor's gentleness and piety.

Following his father's example, Feodor became a military man with a prospect of a brilliant career, but his heart was turning away from the pleasures of life. Contrary to the customs of that time he delayed getting married until the age of 30. During one Sunday church service, Feodor was deeply impressed by the Savior's words, “*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*” (Math.6:24). He heard his calling for a monastic life in those words and secretly, dressed in the clothes of a commoner he left Moscow for the Solovetskaya cloister. For 9 years Feodor was doing the hard work of an obedient novice and was toiling without complaint. He worked as a layman in the vegetable garden, in the smithy and in the bakery. Finally, by the unanimous will of the monastic community he was ordained presbyter and Father Superior.

In this capacity, he was managing zealously the well-being of the cloister and taking special care of the spiritual life. Lakes were connected with canals, marshes were drained and turned into hayfields, roads were cut through impassable places, stock farming was set up, and salt works were improved all under his capacity. He built two grand cathedrals, the Uspenskij (Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos) and the Preobrazhenskij (Transfiguration of the Lord), as well as other churches; a hospital was set up, places were allocated for monasteries and hermitages for those seeking peace and solitude. Sometimes he would retire himself to one of these secluded places, which was known as Philip's desert in pre-revolutionary times. He wrote a new code for the monastery community setting up the industrious mode of life and forbidding idleness.

Philip, the Father Superior, was summoned to Moscow for spiritual counseling where, upon his first meeting with the tsar, he learned that he was to be appointed a Metropolitan. With tears he implored Ivan, “Suffer me not to be severed from my monastery, do not load a small boat with an unbearable burden!” Ivan was inexorable and told clerical dignitaries and boyars to per-

suade Philip to be ordained Metropolitan. Philip agreed on the condition of Ivan's abolishing "oprichnina." The clergy and boyars asked Philip not to insist on that condition out of respect to the tsar's autocracy, and to accept the ordaining with humbleness. Philip conceded, seeing God's will in the tsar's inexorable insistence.

In the beginning of Philip's Holy Patriarchy (1567-1568) the horrors of "oprichnina" subsided, but before long oprichniki again started robbing and murdering the citizens. On several occasions talking privately to the tsar, Philip tried to reason with him, but seeing that there was no way he could convince the tsar, he decided to act openly.

On the week of the Veneration of the Precious Cross, March 21, 1568, before the beginning of the Liturgy, the Metropolitan was standing on the cathedra (the raised place in the middle of the church). Unexpectedly, the tsar entered the church accompanied by a drove of oprichniks. All of them, the tsar including, were dressed up in tall black hats, black cassocks, with daggers and swords glistening from under the clothes. Tsar Ivan approached the Prelate from the side and three times bowed his head for a blessing. The Metropolitan was standing still, looking at the icon of Christ the Savior. At last the boyars said, "Metropolitan, the tsar demands your blessing." Philip turned to the tsar as if not recognizing him and said, "This strange attire makes our Orthodox tsar look unfamiliar to me, nor do I recognize him in what he is doing as our tsar. Oh, pious one, what pursuit led you to losing your grandeur? Since the beginning of times it was unheard of that a tsar would bring trouble to his own people. Tatars and heathens have order and fairness while we do not. We offer bloodless sacrifices even to our God, but beyond these walls the innocent blood of our Christians is shed. I lament not of the innocent murdered as martyrs and saints; it is your soul that I mourn over. Although a monarch blessed from above, you are still a mortal one, and you will have to account for all of your deeds before the Lord."

Ivan could hardly suppress his fury, he was whispering threats and knocking his staff against the tiles of the cathedra. Finally he exclaimed, "Philip! Is it that you dare oppose my autocracy? We shall see how powerful you are." The prelate replied, "Good tsar, in vain you try to scare me. I am a visitor on the earth, it is truth that I care about and no threats will make me silent." Enraged beyond description, tsar Ivan left the church, concealing his vindictive malice for the time being.

During the service on July 28 devoted to the veneration of the Smolensk icon of the Theotokos, called Odigitriya, the prelate Philip was going around the walls of the Novodevichii monastery in a procession. The tsar was also there surrounded by his oprichniks. During the readings of the Gospel the prelate noticed an oprichnik who was standing behind the tsar wearing a Tatar's hat on, and drew Ivan's attention to him. But the culprit hastened to take off and hide the hat. Then the oprichniks accused the Metropolitan of deceit and the desire to disgrace the tsar in public. Ivan ordered the prosecution of Philip. Slanderers were used to falsely defame the prelate who had no chance to expose the perjurers, and he was demoted.

On November 8, the feast of Archangel Michael, the prelate was serving at the Uspenski cathedral and as on the day when he accused the tsar, he was standing on the cathedra. All of a sudden the doors opened, a boyar named Basmanov entered the church accompanied by a crowd of oprichniks and told for an order to be proclaimed according to which the astonished parishioners were informed of the defrocking of the Metropolitan. Immediately the oprichniks tore the prelate's garments and having clad him in a ragged monk's dress took him out of the cathedral, put him in a cart and drove him to one of the Moscow monasteries, insulting him and showing scorn all the way. There were rumors that the tsar was planning to execute the Christ's confessor by fire, but upon appeal of the clergy he replaced his sentence with life imprisonment. At the

same time he had many of Philip's relatives executed. Ivan the Terrible sent Philip the head of Ivan Borisovich Klychev, Philip's nephew, whom he loved dearly. The prelate Philip accepted it with awe, put it down, bowed to it, kissed it and having said — “Blessed is he whom Thou have chosen and accepted, Oh, Lord!” — returned it to be taken back to the tsar. Day and night there was a crowd of people around the monastery hoping to catch a glimpse of the great prelate, people were telling legends about him. When Ivan learned about this, he ordered the transfer of Philip to the Tverj Otroch monastery.

A year later the tsar and his army started conquest of Novgorod and Pskov. He sent his oprichnik Maliuta Skuratov ahead to the Otroch monastery. Saint Philip predicted his own death three days prior and had been preparing to depart by receiving the Holy Mysteries. Maliuta came up to the prelate with fake humility and asked Philip to give the tsar a blessing. Philip said, “Do not blaspheme, fulfill the purpose of your visit.” Maliuta flung himself at Philip and strangled him. A grave was dug immediately, and they buried the body of the Holy Martyr with Maliuta watching (December 23, 1569). His bones were brought to the Moscow Uspenskij cathedral — the witness of his great feat.

Troparion: A successor of the forefathers, a pillar of Orthodoxy, a champion of truth, a new confessor, prelate Philip, who gave up his soul for his flock, daring to turn to our Lord, pray for the Orthodox people, who honor and keep Thine sacred memory.

Saint Andrew, Archbishop of Crete

July 17 (July 4 old calendar)

Born in Damascus of Christian parents, Saint Andrew was mute until the age of seven. The power of speech was given to him when his parents took him to church and he received Communion. At the age of fourteen he went to Jerusalem and was tonsured in the monastery of St. Sava the Sanctified. In his understanding and asceticism, he surpassed many of the older monks and was an example to all. The Patriarch took him as his secretary. When the Monothelite heresy, which taught that the Lord had no human will but only a divine one, began to rage, the Sixth Ecumenical Council met in Constantinople in 681, in the reign of Constantine IV. Theodore, Patriarch of Jerusalem, was not able to be present at the Council, and sent Andrew, then a deacon, as his representative. At the Council, Andrew showed his great gifts; his articulateness, his zeal for the Faith and his rare prudence. Being instrumental in confirming the Orthodox faith, Andrew returned to his work in Jerusalem. He was later chosen and enthroned as archbishop of the island of Crete. As archbishop, he was greatly beloved by the people. He was filled with zeal for Orthodoxy and strongly withstood all heresy. With his prayers he drove the Saracens out of Crete. He wrote many learned books, poems and canons, of which the best-known is the Great Canon of Repentance which is read in full on the Thursday of the Fifth Week of the Great Fast. Such was his outward appearance that, looking at his face and listening to the words that flowed like honey from his lips, each man was touched and renewed. Returning from Constantinople to Crete on one occasion, he foretold of his death. True to his prediction, as the ship approached the island of Mitylene, this light of the Church finished his earthly course and his soul went to the Kingdom of Christ. This happened about the year 740.

Troparion, Tone 5:

Like the Prophet David thou didst sing a new song/ in the assembly of the righteous./
Thou initiate of the Holy Spirit,/ thou didst thunder forth thy hymns of grace/ and the word of
righteousness for our salvation,/ O Andrew glory of the Fathers.

Kontakion, Tone 2:

Thou didst sound forth the divine melodies like a trumpet/ and wast a bright lamp for the
world./ Thou didst shine with the light of the Trinity, O righteous Andrew./ Wherefore we cry to
thee:/ Ever intercede for us all.

God's Anointed Sufferer Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II

July 17 (July 4 old calendar).

*The battle against Tsar Nicholas II was clearly bound up with the battle against God
and faith . . . He became a Martyr, having remained faithful to the Ruler of those who
rule, and accepted death in the same way as the martyrs accepted it.* Archbishop John
Maximovitch.

Very soon after Russia accepted the seed of the Gospel (in the year 988) her soil was sanctified by the blood of martyrs. The pure young sons of Grand Duke Vladimir, Boris and Gleb, accepted death at the hands of a political assassin in order to save their people from civil war and terrible upheaval. They became sufferers for righteousness (I Peter 3:14); being conformed to the innocent suffering of Christ, they became true "Passion-Bearers.

As in the beginning of Holy Russia, so at the end: it pleased God to reveal Himself to the Russian people through the innocent suffering of Saints Boris and Gleb; now, in these latter times, He has again unveiled Himself through the purifying suffering of a Tsar, the Anointed of God and supreme Protector of Christ's Church in Russia, Nicholas II.

Western writers do not understand Orthodox monarchy. And because America rebelled against the King of England; Americans in particular have no sympathy for the idea of Monarchy. Indeed, it is almost a sacred tradition to applaud any nation that "comes to its senses" and overthrows its king! The Tsars of Russia are viewed in this same man-centered rather than God-centered light.

But; in Orthodox Russia there once existed a society composed not of "church and state" (such as existed in medieval Europe) but of "government and priesthood"-a holy commonwealth. The Tsar was never placed outside the Church or "above the law," but always *within* the Church and subject to the law of Christ. He was very much the "servant of the Gospel": he was required to live by it and rule by it in order to be worthy of the blessings of God upon himself, his family, and his nation. Such a righteous Father to his people was the last Tsar, Nicholas II. And now, in this year of grace, 1981, in spite of more than 60 years of Marxist deception, it pleases God to reveal Nicholas and those that suffered with him, to the Church and to the whole world (if only the world will hear it!).

Blessed Archbishop John Maximovitch has written: “Why was Tsar Nicholas II persecuted, slandered and killed? Because he was Tsar, Tsar by the Grace of God. He was the bearer and incarnation of the Orthodox world view that the Tsar is the servant of God, the Anointed of God, and that to Him he must give an account for the people entrusted to him by destiny...”

In Orthodox teaching, Tsar Nicholas was the last representative of lawful Christian authority in the world, the last one to restrain *the mystery of iniquity* (2 Thess. 2:27). (And, indeed, from the time of his martyrdom can be dated the unprecedented lawlessness, godlessness, and apostasy of this final age: the complete unleashing of the forces of darkness, which now threaten to completely engulf the world as a preparation for the reign of Antichrist.)

An Orthodox monarch receives his authority from God, but by what means and in what manner does it come to him? Authority to govern in the Name of God and perform the highest earthly ministry descends upon a Tsar in the Sacrament of Anointing, at the time of his coronation. After the crowning he is told that “this visible and material adornment of thy head is to thee a manifest sign that the King of Glory, Christ, invisibly crowneth thee.” The Anointing takes place after the reading of the Gospel in Divine Liturgy. The chief hierarch anoints the Tsar with Holy Chrism on the brow, eyes, nostrils, lips, ears, breast, and hands, saying each time: “The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Thus, Nicholas II received his authority through a Sacrament. The Holy Spirit was upon him! “By rejecting the Tsar, the people blasphemed the Sacrament and trampled upon the grace of God” (*Illustrated History of the Russian People*).

In 1917 Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow saw in a vision the Saviour speaking to Tsar Nicholas: “You see,” said the Lord, “two cups in my hands: one is bitter for your people, and the other is sweet for you.” In the vision the Tsar begged for the bitter cup. The Saviour then took a large glowing coal from the cup and put it in the Tsar's hands. The Tsar's whole body then began to grow light, until he was shining like a radiant spirit. Then the vision changed to a field of flowers, in the middle of which Nicholas was distributing manna to a multitude of people. A voice spoke: “The Tsar has taken the guilt of the Russian people upon himself and the Russian people is forgiven.” Nicholas himself once said: “Perhaps an expiatory sacrifice is needed for Russia's salvation. I will *be that sacrifice*. May God's will be done!

He had a very strong sense of his destiny as an Orthodox ruler. Although he had an opportunity to flee the country with his family and seek refuge outside Russia, he and his Empress deliberately chose to stay and accept whatever awaited them. He had been born on the feast of the Prophet Job and because of this he often remarked to his advisors: “I have a secret conviction that I am destined for a terrible trial, that I shall not receive my reward on this earth.” No wonder that our Russian Bishops Abroad wrote (in 1968): “Job the Much-Suffering, on the day of whose commemoration the Tsar was born, said in his grievous suffering, concerning the day of his conception: 'As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year' (Job 3:6). *Terrible was the night of the murder of the Tsar!*”

On that unspeakable night, “the prisoners were all in a deep sleep when they were awakened and ordered to dress in order to leave the city... The Imperial Family descended to the basement where the Sovereign sat down, with his ill son, on a chair in the middle of the room. The Duchesses, the doctor, and three dedicated servants were seated around him. Every one was waiting for the signal to depart. At the executioner's announcement (which stunned all the prisoners) of the impending execution, the Empress succeeded in crossing herself. She was killed instantly, together with the Sovereign. God spared them from hearing the groans of the Tsarevitch and the cries of the wounded Grand Duchess Anastasia. The first bullets did not bring death to the



youngest ones and they were savagely killed with blows of bayonets and gun-butts and with shots at point-blank range. The *innocent and holy had suffered the greatest torture*"? (*Illustrated Russian History*).

In the words of Fr. Dimitry Dudko, one of the first of that wave of modern confessors to speak out against the betrayal of the Church in Russia: "The Tsar is a saint and, moreover, one of the greatest saints. O great saint of Russia, Great-Martyr Nicholas, pray to God for us!"

New Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth

July 5 (July 18 old calendar)

One of the brightest stars in the celestial array of Russia's New Martyrs is holy Grand Duchess Elizabeth. A convert to Orthodoxy, she outshone many of those whose Faith she had so ardently embraced. She was like a sun whose penetrating rays warm hearts grown cold and renew the lost faith of a fallen and despairing humanity, as if to say that not all have succumbed to an egotistical self love, that there are still those servants of Love, whose example points the way to the true path, to happiness both on this earth and for all eternity. She placed a law in her heart: that the strong bear the frailties of the weak. Love was the cornerstone of her life and all her activities. This love made easy for her what was difficult, it made serving her fellowman a pleasure, and through it the forgiveness of enemies was made possible. For the sake of this Love she sacrificed herself for others, thereby fulfilling that greatest of commandments according to the Apostle of love, that "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 3:16).

There exists perhaps no more eloquent tribute to the holy Grand Duchess than the spiritual portrait so finely drawn by the late Metropolitan Anastassy:

"She was a rare combination of exalted Christian spirit, moral nobility, enlightened mind, gentle heart, and refined taste. She possessed an extremely delicate and multifaceted spiritual composition and her outward appearance reflected the beauty and greatness of her spirit. Upon her brow lay the seal of an inborn, elevated dignity which set her apart from those around her. Under the cover of modesty, she often strove — though in vain, to conceal herself from the gaze of others, but one could not mistake her for another. Wherever she appeared, one would always ask: "*Who is she who looketh forth as the morning, clear as the sun*" (Song of Solomon 6:10)? Wherever she would go she emanated the pure fragrance of the lily. Perhaps it was for this reason that she loved the color white — it was the reflection of her heart. All of her spiritual qualities were strictly balanced, one against another, never giving an impression of one-sidedness. Femininity was joined in her to a courageous character; her goodness never led to weakness and blind, unconditional trust of people. Even in her finest heartfelt inspirations she exhibited that gift of discernment which has always been so highly esteemed by Christian ascetics..."

The Grand Duchess was born on October 20, 1861, the daughter of Princess Alice of Hesse and the granddaughter of Queen Victoria of England, under whose strict tutelage she received both an extensive and a practical education. Her mother died when she was still young, the first tragedy in a life marked by inner suffering. But through, greatness of spirit, her sorrow at the absence of maternal love was later transformed into a tender and solicitous compassion for others who lacked this love.



The Convent today: main church

Chosen as the future wife of the Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, the Grand Duchess arrived in Moscow and set about learning all she could about her newly adopted homeland, its people and its culture. Her heart was soon captured by the beauty and spiritual depth of Orthodoxy which she discovered so tightly interwoven into the rich fabric of the Russian soul. It was not mere formality that prompted her decision to become Orthodox, but a strong inner conviction. In Orthodoxy she found full expression for the natural spiritual cast of her character. Social obligations at the palace, however, prevented this disposition from blossoming, although in keeping with her new position she was able to dedicate much time to philanthropic activities. It was only with the tragic assassination of her husband in 1905 that Providence granted her the opportunity to withdraw from the tumult of a world which her soul found so wearisome. But through her patient

endurance she had already achieved a measure of Christian perfection. This was manifest in her ready forgiveness of her husband's murderer whom she even went to visit in hopes of softening his heart. On the memorial cross erected upon the site of her husband's death, she had inscribed the Gospel words, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do..." She had already begun the ascent up the ladder of Christian virtue.

Ignoring the scandal caused by such a move, the Grand Duchess left the royal apartments and settled in a building which she had acquired at Ordinka. Here, with the counsel of the eiders of the Zosima Hermitage under whom she had placed herself in total obedience, she laid the foundation for a sisterhood which combined in itself the ascetic labors of the monastic life and works of charity. This quiet haven in the midst of a bustling city was named in honor of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, whose two natures of service and prayer were so beautifully intertwined in the mission of the new community. "To be not of this world and at the same time to live and act in the world in order to transform it — this was the foundation upon which she desired to establish her convent."

The Grand Duchess was personally involved in all the plans for the buildings of the community, and they reflected her refined aesthetic sensibilities. The main church was built in the traditional Novgorod-Pskov style and painted by the well-known Russian artist Nesterov. The austere white walls were balanced with exquisite sculptured ornamentation. The architectural harmony of the buildings, the peaceful atmosphere, the beauty of the church services — all combined to lift the tired soul from its earthly cares and give it a glimpse of paradise. Even members of the unchurchly contemporary Russian society, whose spiritual re-education was of such concern to the Grand Duchess, were drawn to this unique community.

"It is not surprising that the convent quickly blossomed and attracted many sisters from the aristocracy as well as the common people. Nearly monastic order reigned within the inner life of the community and both within and without the convent the activities of the Grand Duchess consisted in the care of those who visited the sick who were lodged in the convent, in the material and moral help given to the poor, and in the almshouse for those orphans and abandoned children found in every large city. The Grand Duchess paid special attention to the unfortunate children who bore within themselves the curse of their fathers' sins, the children born in the turbid slums of Moscow only to wither before they had a chance to blossom. Many of them were taken into the orphanage built for them where they were quickly revived spiritually and physically. For others, constant supervision at their place of residence was established. The spirit of initiative and moral sensitivity which accompanied the Grand Duchess in all her activities, inspired and impelled her to search out new paths and forms of philanthropic activity, which sometimes reflect-

ed the influence of her first, western homeland, and its advanced organizations for social improvement and mutual aid...”

Wherever there was a need the Grand Duchess would try to answer it, and only her strong spirit was able to keep her from being entirely overcome physically by all that she in her willingness was ready to undertake. All her activities, however, did not cause her to wander from the “one thing needful,” and while serving the least of Christ's brethren, she was ever at Christ's feet, listening to His words.

The sorrowful tribulations which visited Russia as the Revolution spread its shadow over the land only caused her virtues of love and self-sacrifice to shine more brightly. Together with her younger sister, Tsaritsa Alexandra, she was slandered on account of her German blood. But she harbored neither bitterness nor hatred towards her enemies, and even the revolutionaries recognized her greatness of spirit and spared her and her community for a time,

Finally, however, the martyr's crown was brought within her reach. On Pascha, 1918, the Grand Duchess was suddenly arrested and taken first to Ekaterinburg and then to Alopevsk where, with her ever-faithful companion Sister Barbara, she was imprisoned in one of the city schools. On the fateful night of July 5/18, together with other royal captives, she was taken in an automobile outside the city and buried alive in a mine shaft. Even here, in the bowels of the earth, she did not cease to manifest her sacrificing love. Excavations have shown that until the last moment she strove to serve the grand dukes who were severely injured by the fall.

At last her precious remains — which, according to eye-witnesses were found in the mine shaft completely untouched by corruption — were received with triumph in Jerusalem and laid to rest in a sepulchre of the church of St. Mary Magdalen, just over the hill from Bethany where the sisters, Sts. Martha and Mary, served and glorified the Lord.

Saint Procopius

July 21 (July 8 old calendar)

Saint Procopius was born in Jerusalem to a Christian father and a pagan mother, his name originally being Neanias. After his father's death, his mother brought him up entirely in the spirit of Roman idolatry. When he had grown up, the Emperor Diocletian saw him and was so pleased with him that he took him to court to serve in the army. When this wicked Emperor launched a persecution of Christians, he ordered Neanias to go with a detachment of soldiers to Alexandria and exterminate the Christians there. But on the road something happened to Neanias that was similar to what happened to Saul. At three o'clock in the morning there was a violent earthquake, the Lord Jesus appearing to him and saying, “Neanias, where are you going, and against whom are you rebelling?” In great fear, Neanias replied, “Who are you, Lord? I cannot recognize You.” Then a brilliant Cross, as of crystal, appeared in the sky and a voice came from the Cross, “I am Jesus, the crucified Son of God. By this sign that you have seen, overcome your enemies, and My peace will be with you.” This event utterly changed Neanias's life. He caused a cross such as he had seen to be made, and instead of moving against the Christians, set off with his soldiers against the Agarians (Arabs), who were attacking Jerusalem. He entered Jerusalem victorious and told his mother that he was a Christian. Brought to trial, he took off his army belt and sword and cast them before the judge, demonstrating that he was a soldier only of Christ the King. After harsh torture, he was thrown into prison. There Christ the Lord appeared to him again, baptizing him and giving him the name Procopius. One day twelve women came to the window of his

cell and said to him, “We also are the servants of Christ.” Arrested for this, they were thrown into the same prison, where St. Procopius instructed them in the Christian faith and carefully prepared them to receive the crown of martyrdom.* These twelve women were then harshly tortured. Beholding their sufferings and courage, Procopius’ mother also came to faith in Christ, and then all thirteen were put to death. When St. Procopius was led to the scaffold, he raised his hands towards the East and prayed to God for all the poor and needy, the destitute and the widowed, and especially for the holy Church, that it might grow and spread and that Orthodoxy might shine to the end of time. He was assured from heaven that his prayer was heard, after which he joyfully laid his head under the sword and went to his Lord, to eternal joy. St. Procopius suffered with honor in Palestinian Caesarea, and was crowned with an eternal wreath of glory, on July 8th, 303.

Author’s note: Therefore those in the married state (‘crowned’), invoke St. Procopius, together with the God-crowned Constantine and Helena.

Troparion, Tone 5

Heaven caught thee and drew thee to piety,/ and like Paul thou didst gladly follow Christ,/ O Procopius adornment of martyrs./ Through the might of the Cross thou didst excel in contest/ and put Belial to shame,/ from whose malice preserve those who lovingly praise thee.

Kontakion, Tone 2

Zealous for Christ and armed with the might of the Cross/ thou didst humble the proud and bold enemy./ O Procopius, thou didst exalt the Church/ and dost now enlighten us in the Faith.

Saint Procopius

July 21 (July 8)

Saint Procopius was a German Catholic. He was running a merchant business in Novgorod when he became enraptured by the beauty of the Orthodox services. He converted into Orthodoxy, gave his wealth and possessions to the indigent and became a monk at the Saint Varlaam-of-Khutyn monastery outside Novgorod. After some time shunning from fame he left for Ustiug where Procopius chose to accomplish the ordeal of God’s fool pretending to be a fool in order to attain utmost humbleness and humility. Thus he became the first fool-for-Christ-sake in Russia. He had to go through many afflictions accomplishing this hard feat. Carrying three wooden staffs he walked barefoot and poorly dressed all year round. He slept on church porches or simply on the ground. He would take alms from the compassionate simple people, but he would never accept any charity from the rich, whom he considered obtained their possessions by unrighteous ways; even though this would cause him to go hungry for several days.

One fiercely cold day when even birds got frozen in flight, the Blessed God’s fool was looking for shelter, but no one let him in. He wanted to warm himself up by lying next to some dogs, but they ran away. Procopius was freezing to death. Suddenly he felt a wave of heavenly warmth and a touch of an angel on his face. That gave the Blessed Fool-for-Christ-Sake warmth and strength. He related this miracle to a cathedral cleric Simeon and asked him not to tell anyone about it before his death.

The gift of clairvoyance was endowed on the God's fool for all his sufferings and feats. Once he bowed to a three-year-old girl and said to her mother, "This is a mother of a great saint." That girl became the mother of prelate Stephen-of-Perm.

In the year 1290 Procopius was going about the town for a week appealing to the citizens to repent and pray to God for deliverance from the fate of Sodom and Gomorra (Gen. Chapter 19). Nobody believed him. Suddenly a somber cloud appeared in the sky and was growing bigger and bigger, turning the day into night. A terrible storm with lightning and roaring thunder shook the walls of the buildings. It was so strong and loud that people could not hear each other. The premonition of doomsday overwhelmed people. They rushed to the cathedral where the Blessed was already praying before the icon of the Annunciation of Theotokos. Then everybody witnessed a miracle; chrism started flowing from the icon as a sign of mercy granted to the town by the Theotokos. The chrism was so abundant that people could fill the cathedral's vessels. Those anointed got cured from various diseases. Then the stifling air turned fresh and the sun appeared in the sky. At the natural boundary of Kotovalski, 20 miles away from Ustiug, the dark clouds broke out with such hail and lightning that a century old forest was demolished, while neither people nor cattle were injured. To commemorate this wonder of deliverance from death, the holiday of the Ustiug icon of Theotokos was established.

Everything the saint did and every word he said when talking to virtuous people was full of exhortations and admonitions. The righteous Procopius passed away at a very old age in 1303 at the gate of the Arkhangelsk monastery. Many wonders were witnessed to occur over his grave, and there were accounts of his apparitions.

Troparion:

Enlightened by the God's grace to heavenly wisdom, having withdrawn your mind from earthly vanity Thou were giving it adamantly through your heart to the Giver of life. Undeified life of tolerance and purity has thou lived and passed away preserving the virtuous faith. After death let us see the light of thy life, as thou art imparting wonders from the source inexhaustible upon the believers who come to thy sacred grave, Oh, all-blessed Procopius, pray Christ our God that He may save our souls.

The Venerable Anthony and Theodosius

July 23 (July 10 old calendar)

Saint Anthony of the Kiev-Pechora caves was born in the beginning of the 11th century in the town of Liubeche (near Chernigov) and was baptized with the name of Antippa. From an early age he was drawn to life blessed with spirituality, and following a higher indication he decided to go to the mount Athos. In one of the Athos caves he took monastic vows and started to live in a secluded cave near the monastery. This cave is still shown to visitors. When St. Anthony became spiritually experienced the Father Superior entrusted him with the task of expanding monasticism in Russia. The year was 1051 and the country had only started to turn to Christianity at the time. Anthony obeyed.

In Kiev Venerable Anthony found several monasteries founded by Greeks upon orders by the Kiev princes, but he did not join any of these monasteries. Instead, he chose to live in a 4-

yard cave dug out by presbyter Ilarion. Anthony became well known in Athos as his life there was a feat of monastic asceticism; rye bread every other day and a little water was all he ate. Before long he became famous not only in Kiev, but also in other Russian cities. Many people came to ask him for spiritual guidance and blessing. Some people were willing to join him. The first one accepted was a priest called Nikon and the second to be accepted was Venerable Theodosius.

Until that time the Venerable Theodosius lived with his parents in Kursk. From his early youth he was known as a pious and righteous person. He went to church every day and read the Bible attentively, he was modest, humble and virtuous. Having learned that liturgy was sometimes not served because of the lack of communion bread, he decided to help. He bought wheat, ground it himself and brought the baked communion bread to church. His mother loved him dearly, but she did not share his aspiration, which caused him much trouble.

At one point in church he heard the Lord's words, "*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*" (Matt. 10:37). He decided to leave his mother (his father had died by that time) and his native town for Kiev and stay with the Venerable Anthony. "You can see, my child," said Anthony, "that my cave is small and uncomfortable." "The Lord himself lead me to your place," answered Theodosius, "I will obey you in everything."

When the Venerable Anthony had 12 disciples he left his cave for a nearby mountain, dug a cave for himself and lived in seclusion there. Theodosius stayed at the former place; after some time the monastery community elected him to be their Father Superior. He started to establish the rules of community life following the code of the Constantinople's Studion monastery. The main rules of his code were: all possessions of the monks were to become common property; monks were to be working all the time; the duties were assigned according to a person's abilities by the Father Superior; every work was preceded by a prayer and an elder's blessing; and confessions were to be made to the Father Superior who was a true leader of the community on the path of salvation. The Venerable Theodosius watched the life of the monks in the cells making sure that no one had any unnecessary excess and checked what everyone was doing. He would come to the cell doors even at night and if he heard a conversation of two or three monks gathered together, he would strike his staff against the door and in the morning the violators would be reprimanded. The Venerable Father himself was an example to the community of monks by his actions. He carried water, cut wood, worked as a baker, wore simple cloths and was the first to come both to Church and to work. In addition to his asceticism, the Venerable Theodosius became distinguished for his great compassion to the poor and aspiration for spiritual enlightenment. He also tried to persuade the monks to follow this example. Not far from the monastery he set up a shelter for the destitute, the blind, the lame, and the invalids. One tenth of the monastery's income was allocated to maintain that house.

In addition, every Saturday he would send a cart full of bread for the imprisoned. The indoctrination work of the Venerable Theodosius that reached us consists of two teaching bequests to people, ten ordinances to monks, two addresses to Prince Isyaslav and two prayers.

The development of the Russian Holy Church was greatly promoted by the Kiev-Pechora monastery founded by the Venerable Anthony and established by the Venerable Theodosius. Within the walls of that cloister many famous Archbishops, zealous preachers and outstanding writers were educated. The most well known prelates and monks of the Kiev-Pechora monastery are: Saint Leontius and Isaiah (Bishops of Rostov), Niphont (bishop of Novgorod), Venerable Kuksha (preacher of the Vyatka people), and writers Nestor the Chronicler and Simon.

Troparion, Tone 4

Thou didst leave the tumult of the world to follow Christ according to the Gospel;/ thou didst lead a life equal to the Angels and reach the haven of Mount Athos./ From thence with thy fathers' blessing thou didst illumine thy fatherland at Kiev,/ where thou didst lead a multitude of monks along the path to Christ and His kingdom./ Pray to Him, O Saint Anthony, that He may save our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 8

Thou didst surrender to God, having loved Him from thy childhood,/ and follow Him with all thy heart and soul, O Saint Anthony./ Thou didst despise worldly goods and live in a cave in the earth,/ fighting the good fight against the wiles of the enemy./ Having illumined the ends of the earth thou didst fly rejoicing to heaven/ where thou dost stand among the Angels before the throne of God;/ remember us who honor thee that we may cry: Rejoice, O Anthony our Father.

Princess Olga Equal-to-the-Apostles

July 24 (July 11 old calendar).

In the year 862, the Novgorod Slavs asked Rurick to be their prince. Two of his comrades-in-arms, Askold and Dir, left Novgorod to try their luck in the south of the country. They saw Kiev on the bank of the Dniepre and conquered it. In 866 they launched a campaign moving the Russian army from Kiev against Tzargrad (Constantinople). In Constantinople, the Emperor Mikhail the III and the Patriarch Photios prayed to God and after the night service in the Vlakhern Cathedral they carried the cross to the shore of the Bosphorus bay. They dipped the chasuble of the Theotokos into the waters of the bay. The sea that had been calm before that, became suddenly stormy and wrecked the ships of the Russians. Many of them died, and the ones who survived came home impressed and awed by the wrath that the Lord sent upon them. (Later that event began to be celebrated as the Protection of the Most-Holy Theotokos).

Before long a Greek bishop came to Russia and started preaching and telling Russians about our Lord the Savior and the Holy wonders recorded in the Old and New Testaments. The Russians who heard him telling about the three young men surviving the blazing furnace of Babylon (Dan. 3), stopped him and said, "If we do not see a similar miracle, we will not believe you." The bishop said prayers and then placed the holy Gospel into the fire. The flames did not harm the Gospel, not even the cloth book markers were singed. This miracle impressed the people so much that many of them started to convert to Christianity. A church dedicated to Nicolas the Wonderworker was built on the grave of one of those Christians.

Oleg, Rurick's relative, succeed his throne. He conquered Kiev and had a successful military campaign against Tzargrad (year 906). He also accomplished a trade treaty with the Greeks that was profitable for the Russians. Rurick's son, Igor, signed a new trade treaty with Tzargrad after another war in 945. Describing this event the chronicler mentioned that in Kiev the prince's army swore to observe the treaty; pagans vowed before the statue of Perun, while Christians vowed in the church of St. Ilias. This shows that under Igor there were Christians in Kiev and even among the prince's soldiers. Igor's wife, Olga, was very beautiful, intelligent and virtuous.

After Igor's death she ruled Russia because her son Svyatoslav, was too young at the time. According to the annals, she was terrible and merciless to the enemies of her motherland. But the Russian people loved and respected her as a mother for her caring devotion, compassion and fairness. She never tyrannized anyone, she was a fair judge, her punishments were merciful, and she cared for the poor, the elderly and the crippled. She listened patiently to every petitioner and was glad to fulfill every fair request.

When Svyatoslav grew older she could spend more time on charity. Her conversations with Kiev clergymen led her to understand the value of true faith in contrast to paganism and she decided to be baptized (in 957). According to the old stories told at that time, she went to Constantinople for the sacred mystery of Christening to be performed by the Patriarch Polyeuctus. Emperor Constantine the Bagryanorodni was her godfather. Saint Olga was baptized Elena. After being christened Saint Olga tried to persuade her son to convert to Christianity, but Svyatoslav was too belligerent to accept her convictions. "I will be a laughing stock for my soldiers," he said. At the same time he did not prohibit his subjects to get baptized. When St. Olga came home after Christening she devoted her life to Christian piety and to the spreading of the Christian faith among her subjects. It is believed that it was St. Olga who built the wooden church of St. Sofia in Kiev.

According to an author from that period, St. Olga "having perceived the true God, Maker of heaven and earth, and having converted into Christianity, destroyed the idols of the devil and began to live according to Jesus Christ's commandments. She loved God with all of her heart and soul and sanctified herself with the good deeds of clothing the poor, giving food and rest to homeless, providing the destitute, orphans and widows with everything they needed and doing this all with the quiet love of her heart."

Saint Olga left our world in 969. Prince Vladimir put her imperishable relics to Desyatinnaya cathedral. It was the first time that the sacred relics were revealed in Russia. Later (before the Mongol invasion) God glorified the relics of the Princess Olga with wonders and she was sanctified.

Troparion

Thou didst give wings to thy mind with the knowledge of God./ and soar beyond creatures to God the Creator of all./ And when thou hadst found him thou was baptized and reborn./ Thou dost enjoy the Tree of Life, remaining eternally incorrupt, O ever glorious Olga.

Great Prince Vladimir

Equal-to-the-Apostles and baptism of Russians

July 28 (July 15 old calendar).

Prince Vladimir was the son of Prince Svyatoslav and Malusha, the Princess of the Drevlyany people. He was raised by his mother's brother Dobrynya, who was a pagan. In 972 Vladimir became the ruler of Novgorod. In 980, when the war between brothers was at its highest point, Vladimir started hostilities against Kiev, ruled at the time by his brother Yaropolk. After the victory over his brother Vladimir became the ruler of Kiev. He conquered Galitia, suppressed the rebellious Votka people, fought with the Pecheneg tribes, and expanded the territory subject to

him from the Baltic Sea in the north to the river Boug in the south. He had 5 wives and numerous concubines. He installed idols on the Kiev Mountains with human sacrifices being brought to them. It was at that time that Variagians Feodor and Ioann died for being faithful to the Lord. The death of these martyrs impressed Vladimir so much that he began to doubt pagan beliefs.

Vladimir invited missionaries from many countries to come to Kiev: Moslem Bulgarians who lived beyond the Volga river, German Latins, Jews and Greeks. The prince asked them about their creeds, and each of the visitors offered him his own belief. It was the Greek preacher who impressed Vladimir most of all. At the end of their conversation, the preacher described the day of the Lord's judgment. Upon counseling with his boyars, Vladimir sent 10 wise men to find out whose faith was better. When the Russian envoys arrived in Constantinople they were impressed to the depth of their souls by the splendor of the St. Sofia cathedral, the harmonious singing of the royal choir and the grandeur of the service conducted by the Patriarch. "We were not even aware if we were on the earth or in heaven," they related to Vladimir while recounting their impressions. And the boyars added, "If the Greek faith had not been superior to other beliefs, your grandmother, Olga, who was the wisest of living people, would not have embraced it."

Vladimir decided to get baptized, but he did not want to turn Russia into a Greek subject. For this reason Vladimir started hostilities against Greece and occupied Hersones, from where he sent envoys to Constantinople demanding that the emperors Basilius and Constantine agree to his marrying their sister Anna. They replied that Anna could only marry a Christian. Then Vladimir declared that he is willing to accept Christianity. But prior to the bride's arrival to Hersones, Vladimir was inflicted by blindness.

In this state, like the Apostle Paul, he became aware of his spiritual powerlessness and was prepared for the great miracle of rebirth. When the Princess arrived in Hersones, she advised Vladimir to get baptized as soon as possible. Vladimir was baptized in 988 and was named Vasilii. Upon coming out of the baptismal font he regained his physical and spiritual vision and exclaimed in rapture, "Now I have seen the true God!"

Returning to Kiev together with Korsun and Greek priests, Vladimir suggested to his twelve sons to become Christians and they were baptized in one of the Kiev streams called Kreshchatic. Many boyars followed the example of his sons. Meanwhile Vladimir started to ban and destroy idols. Perun, the greatest of the idols, was tied to a horse, dragged off its mount with desecration and thrown into the Dnieper River. This was followed by preaching the Gospel to people. Christian ministers brought people together and preached to them the true sacred faith. Finally Saint Vladimir told all the Kiev citizens, both rich and poor, to come to the bank of Dnieper on a certain day to get baptized. The Kiev citizens were willing to fulfill the Prince's order reasoning: "The Prince and boyars would not have adopted the new faith, if it had not been better."

On the appointed day, the citizens of Kiev came to the bank of the Dnieper River. Vladimir himself came there also accompanied by Christian ministers. All the people entered the river, with the water reaching up to their necks or chest, adults were holding children and babies, while the ministers were reading prayers on the bank. Saint Vladimir was elatedly praying to God that he and his people be commended to the Lord.

After the baptizing of the people living in Kiev and its suburbs, the new faith was brought to Novgorod. In 990, Mikhail, the first metropolitan of Kiev, arrived in Novgorod with six bishops accompanied by Dobrynia, uncle of Saint Vladimir. Like in Kiev, they overthrew the statue of Perun, dragged it on the ground and cast it into the Volkhov River. After that they proclaimed the people Catechumens and baptized them. Metropolitan Mikhail together with 4 bishops and Dobrynia left Novgorod for Rostov, where they baptized many citizens, received presbyters into

the ministry and built a church. But the pagan beliefs persisted so long after that in Rostov, that the first two Rostov bishops — Saint Feodor and Saint Illarion — after many great efforts to eradicate paganism had to leave the cathedra. Saint bishops Leontius and Isiaya worked hard to put an end to idolatry in Rostov. Venerable Ambrosius founded the Rostov monastery and was an archimandrite there.

In 992 the Holy faith was brought to the Suzdal region. Prince Vladimir went there with two bishops. The Suzdal people adopted Christianity and got baptized willingly.

Vladimir's children receiving appanage principalities from him, gave much attention to expansion of Christianity in their crown domains. Hence, in the 10th century, in addition to Kiev, Novgorod, Rostov, and Suzdal, the Holy Creed was also taught in the towns of Murom, Polotsk, Vladimir-of-Volyn, Smolensk, Pskov, Lutsk, Tmutarakan and in the land of Drevlans. Later, in the land of the Vyatich people (more recently called Kursk, Orlov, Tula and Kaluga regions) Venerable Kuksha, a monk of the Pechora monastery, accomplished a lot of ministerial work and preaching. He suffered a martyr's death from the pagans.

In the beginning the Christian faith was initially adopted in territories adjacent to Kiev and along the waterway from Kiev to Novgorod, wherefrom it was spread along the Volga artery. Under the Orthodox dominion, Slavic tribes started to be drawn together into a united state.

The successful conversion of Russian people into Christianity can be explained by the fact that it was spread predominantly by peaceful means — by ministration and preaching (unlike Roman Catholics who often used fire and sword). As well as the fact that it was done in the native Slavic language, due to the work of Saints Cyril and Methodius.

Following the example of Russians some national minorities living on lands adjacent to Russia started to convert into Orthodox Christianity. Thus, in the 10th through the 13th centuries some Finnish tribes (Izhora and Korela), Chude, Cheremis and Votiaks, and also some non-Russian tribes living in Vologda and some other national minorities were baptized. In the beginning of the 13th century the city of Nizhni-Novgorod was erected on the banks of the Volga and Oka Rivers to become a stronghold of Orthodoxy among non-Russians living along the Volga River and in the middle regions of Russia.

In the western parts of Russia the spreading of Orthodoxy was confronted by another strong influence coming from the Roman Catholic Church. Latin missionaries from Sweden were preaching in Finland. The tribes living south of the Finnish bay were initially converted into Orthodoxy, but later Latin missionaries from Denmark inhabited the region. By the end of the 12th century a Latin Order of Knights of the Sword was established in Livonia, which opposed both the Russian influence and the successful expansion of Orthodoxy. In Lithuania the Orthodox Christian faith started to be adopted in the 12th century from the neighboring Russian settlements. In the 13th century, after Lithuanian princes conquered the Russian towns of Novogrudsk, Slonim and Brest, some of the Lithuanian people got baptized.

The expansion of Orthodoxy here was particularly promoted by the martyrdom and death of three court dignitaries of the Lithuanian prince Olgerdt (who was the son of Gedemin, the founder of the Lithuanian kingdom. These were Saints Anthony, Ivan and Eustaphius. But by the end of that century Lithuania and the western part of Russia subject to it joined the Catholic Poland. After that Roman popes did everything possible to attain 2 goals: the separation of southwest lands from the unified Russian church, and the introduction of the so-called "Lithuanian Unia" there.

Influence of Christianity on the life of Russian people.

Immediately after adoption, the Holy Christian faith began to effect positively the life of our ancestors. The society started practicing the Christian way of life such as frequent prayers, charity, and traveling to holy places to name a few. Especially pronounced was the beneficial influence of Christianity on the hearts and lives of some prominent personalities of that time. While a pagan Prince Vladimir was indulging in vices, he was also notorious for cruelty. Christian faith changed him as if he had been born again. He became reserved, chaste and compassionate towards the poor and disabled. Every day in his palace he would give alms to the beggars and send out everything necessary for nurturing the poor and crippled at their homes.

In Christianity, Vladimir was even doubtful about the execution of the worst criminals, he asked bishops if this would constitute a sin. Vladimir's sons, saint martyrs Boris and Gleb, were a true model of Christian piety. The Russian metropolitans Mikhail, Illarion and others were famous for their saintly ways of life. It was in the monasteries that we find especially numerous examples of righteous and devout life.

The development of spiritual enlightenment and written language, as well as the establishment of schools in Russia enhanced the beneficial influence of Christianity on the Russian way of life.

It was a special care for Archbishops and princes to enlighten people in the spirit of Christianity. Following the advice of the first prelate of the Russian church — Metropolitan Mikhail — the Great Prince Vladimir organized schools in Kiev and other cities. Metropolitan Mikhail often invited the teachers and instructed them in the ways to educate children. Prince Vladimir's son Yaroslav the Wise, ordered churches built and people taught in the cities and settlements. In Novgorod he organized a school for 300 children. According to a chronicler, Mikhail himself was reading books "day and night" and gathered "many scribes" who were copying books and sometimes translating them from Greek into Russian. The successors of Vladimir and Yaroslav followed their example, as did the clergy and the monks. The books were considered to be part of the holy work at the monasteries; many monks devoted all their time when free from prayers to reading and translating books. Sometimes in order to copy some books they had to travel to the East — to Constantinople and Athos.

Furthering the Christian enlightenment of people, archbishops and pastors of the Russian church were also striving for establishment of civil order in Russia, which would be based on the unshakable foundation of Christianity. The influence of Russian Christian pastors was especially beneficial during the afflictions of internal strife. Either the metropolitan himself tried to put an end to discords between princes, or sent his bishops to perform the task. Amongst all of those discords and civil strifes, our hierarchy preserved its unity and indivisibility, which was the main factor in uniting the Russian state.

Troparion

Sitting in the throne of the God-protected Kiev,/ thou wast like a merchant seeking goodly pearls, O Vladimir. /Thou didst search and send to the Imperial City/ to know the Orthodox Faith. / Thou didst find Christ the Pearl of great price./ Who chose thee like Paul and enlightened thy blindness of flesh and spirit at the Font./ Thy people celebrate thy repose:/ wherefore pray for Russia and all peoples,/ that the Orthodox may be granted peace and great mercy.



Martyr Julia

July 29 (July 16 old calendar)

During the seizure of Carthage, a young Christian girl by the name of Julia was taken captive and sold to a pagan merchant who took her home with him to Palestine. Although she was surrounded there by idol-worshippers, the young girl held firmly to the standards by which she had been raised, and preserved steadfast her faith in Christ. She earnestly fulfilled all that was demanded of her and faithfully served her master in keeping with the Apostle's words: "*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh... With good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men*" (Eph. 6:6-7).

Although Julia was meek and obedient, there was no way she could be persuaded to do anything that was against Christ's commandments, Time and again the merchant prevailed upon her to forsake the Christian faith and to live in the manner of the pagans. But Julia would sooner die than consent to such a thing. The merchant grew angry and even wanted to kill her, but seeing what a faithful servant she was, he at last left her in peace, He was amazed by her meekness, her patience, her hardworking nature. And when she came of age he entrusted her with important business matters. After working all daylong, it was a joy For Julia to be able to occupy herself with prayer and spiritual reading.

Julia was still in her 20' s when her master had her accompany him on a journey which he undertook for business. On the way their boat made a stop at the Mediterranean island of Corsica. There were at this time many idol-worshippers still living on the island. Near the shore the merchant saw that a group of people were making sacrifices to the pagan gods, and he wished retake part. He left the boat followed by all those who were traveling with him — all but Julia. She stayed behind, grieving over the lost souls of the pagans.

During the merchant's absence, some of the island's inhabitants went aboard the boat. There they saw Julia and found out that she was a Christian, They passed on this news at once to their leader who asked the merchant: "Why is it that not all of your servants have come to honor the gods?"

"They are all here," answered the merchant.

"Then how is it I hear that on the boat you have a girl who does not want to bow down to the gods?"

"My servant Julia?" asked the merchant. "There's no way you can turn her away from the delusion of the Christian religion. I myself have made no small effort to this end; I tried kindness, I tried threats, and I would have had her killed long ago were it not that she is so faithful to me, so hardworking."

"She must bow down to our gods," said the pagan elder. "If you wish, I shall buy her from you and force her myself to honor our gods."

"I'm telling you, she'd rather die than abandon her faith, and there's no way I can sell her. All of your possessions would not begin to compensate for her services."

Angered by the merchant's refusal, the pagan elder determined at all costs to get the Christian maid and force her to bring sacrifice to the gods. He made the merchant drunk, and while he was asleep he sent for Julia.

"Make a sacrifice to the gods," he ordered, "and I'll buy your freedom from your master."

"My freedom lies in working for Christ and serving Him with a pure conscience," answered the girl. "I cannot join you in your falsehood."

The elder ordered the girl to be beaten on the face. She quietly endured this, saying: “For my sake Christ endured slaps and spitting. I am ready to suffer for Him.”

Julia was subjected to all kinds of torture: they tore her hair, cruelly beat her all over, but she remained undefeated.

“I confess Him Who for my sake was beaten, was crowned with thorns, and crucified on the Cross. I am His slave and I am ready to share in His sufferings,” said the young virgin courageously.

After prolonged and cruel tortures, Julia was crucified on a cross.

Upon awakening, when the merchant discovered what had happened, he was very sorrowful; but nothing could be done; the last breath of life had just left the maid. When her holy soul departed to the Lord, several by-standers saw a snow-white dove fly out of her mouth; others saw angels surrounding the virgin martyr. Terrified, they ran off leaving the body hanging on the cross. But that same night, all of this was revealed in a dream to some monks living on a neighboring island; they were charged to recover the body and to give it proper burial, which they did. Later, a church was built on the site of the holy martyr's sufferings, and from that time forth Christians have honored the memory of St. Julia whom the Lord Himself glorified with miracles.

Holy Martyr Marina

July 30 (July 17 old calendar)

Born in Pisidian Antioch from pagan parents, Marina only heard of the Lord Jesus at the age of twelve when she found out about His incarnation from the most pure Virgin, His many miracles, His death by crucifixion and His glorious Resurrection. Her little heart was inflamed with love for the Lord, and she vowed never to marry. Furthermore, she desired in her soul to suffer for Christ and be baptized with the blood of martyrdom. Her father hated her for her faith, and would not regard her as his daughter. The imperial governor, Olymbrius, hearing of Marina and learning that she was a Christian, at first desired her for his wife.

When Marina refused, he ordered her to sacrifice to idols. To this, Marina replied, “I shall not worship nor offer sacrifice to dead idols, lacking the breath of life, which have no awareness of themselves and are not even aware of our honoring or dishonoring them. I will not give them that honor that belongs to my Creator alone.” Then Olymbrius put her to harsh torture, and threw her into prison wounded and bleeding. Marina prayed to God in the prison and after she had prayed, there appeared to her first the devil in the form of a terrible serpent, which twined itself about her head. When she made the sign of the Cross, the serpent split asunder and disappeared. Then she was bathed in heavenly light, the walls and roof of the prison disappeared and a Cross was revealed, resplendent and lofty.

On the top of the Cross was perched a white dove, from which there came a voice, “Rejoice, Marina, thou dove of Christ, daughter of the Zion that is on high, for the day of thy joy is drawing near!” And Marina was healed by the power of God of all her wounds. The demented judge tortured her the next day by fire and water, but Marina endured it all as if not in her own body. She was finally sentenced to death by beheading. At the moment of her death, the Lord Jesus appeared to her, accompanied by angels. She was beheaded in the time of the Emperor Diocletian, but remains alive in soul and in power in heaven and on earth. One of her hands is preserved in the monastery of Vatopedi on the Holy Mountain. Even in Albania, in the Langa mountains overlooking Lake Ochrid, there is a monastery of St. Marina with some of her wonderwork-

ing relics. Numerous miracles have been wrought in this monastery and still are, witnessed not only by Christians but also by Moslems. The Turks have such a veneration for this holy place that they have never laid hands on either the place or the monastery's possessions. At one time, a Turk was caretaker of the monastery.

Troparion, Tone 5

O glorious Marina betrothed to God the Word,/ thou didst abandon all things earthly/ and contest victoriously as a virgin./ For thou didst trample on the invisible foe when he appeared,/ O holy trophy-bearer,/ and thou dost now bestow gifts of healing on the world.

Kontakion, Tone 3

Adorned with the beauty of virginity,/ thou hast been crowned with unfading wreaths, O Marina./ Having shed thy blood in holy martyrdom/ and radiant with miracles of healing,/ thou hast received the prize of victory from the hand of thy Creator.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov

August 1 and January 15 (July 19 and January 2 old calendar).

Saint Seraphim of Sarov was one of the greatest Russian ascetics and wonderworkers, with profound spiritual discernment. He was distinguished by a great humility. When being praised by all the world, he referred to himself as “the poor wretch Seraphim.”

Saint Seraphim (Prochoros Moshnin in the world) was born to a merchant family living in Kursk. At the age of 10 he fell seriously ill. In a dream during his illness he saw the Mother of God, who promised to heal him. Several days later a procession with the miracle-working Kursk icon of Theotokos changed its usual route due to bad weather and was passing by the house of the Moshnins. After Seraphim's mother took him to kiss the icon, he started to get better very quickly. While young, Seraphim had to help his parents in their store, but he was not interested in trade. Young Seraphim liked to read the Lives of Saints, to go to church and to pray in seclusion.

At the age of 18 Seraphim decided resolutely to become a monk. His mother blessed him with a big copper cross, which he wore over his clothes for the rest of his life. He was accepted as a novice to the Sarov monastery.

From the very first day of his life at the monastery Seraphim was noted for his abstention from food and sleep. He ate very little only once a day. He abstained from food completely on Wednesdays and Fridays. Having asked for a blessing from his elder instructor, he started going to the forest for prayers and meditation in seclusion. Soon he fell ill again and had to stay in bed from time to time. Again he was healed by the Mother of God, who appeared in his dream accompanied by several saints. Pointing at the Venerable Seraphim, She said to Apostle John the Theologian, “This one is of our kinship.” Then She touched his side with Her staff and healed him. He took monastic vows in 1786 (at the age of 27).

He was given the name Seraphim which means “fiery” or “burning” in Hebrew. Soon he was ordained a deacon. He proved to be as good as his name by his ardent praying. He spent all of his time in the temple, resting very rarely. Amongst such prayers, services and work in the name of God, Seraphim was blessed by the vision of angels participating in sermons and singing. During the Liturgy on Great Thursday he had a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ incarnate in hu-

man flesh as He was entering the temple together with Angelic Hosts and blessing those in prayer. Venerable Seraphim was so impressed by the vision that he could not speak for a long time.

In 1793 Venerable Seraphim was elevated to hieromonk, after which he daily served and partook of the Holy Mysteries for a year. Then Saint Seraphim began to go to a “far wilderness,” which was a desolate place in a forest 5 miles away from the Sarov monastery. He reached great perfection during that time. Bears, hares, wolves, foxes and other wild animals would come to the hut of the ascetic. Matrona Pleshcheyeva, an elderly nun from the Diveyev monastery, saw Saint Seraphim feeding a wild bear from his hands, relating that “especially remarkable was the face of the great elder. It was as cheerful and bright as an angel’s countenance.”

While living in the wilderness Venerable Seraphim once was attacked and almost killed by a band of robbers. He was physically very strong and had an axe in his hands at the moment, but he did not defend himself. In response to their demanding money and threatening him, he put the axe to the ground, crossed his arms on his chest and gave himself up to the bandits. They started beating him with the head of his own axe. Blood came streaming from his mouth and ears, and he lost consciousness. Then they beat him with a billet, stamped and kicked him, and dragged him on the ground. They stopped torturing him only when they thought he was dead.

The only treasure the robbers could find in his hermitage was the Icon of the Mother of God (Pertinence), in front of which he always prayed. When after some time the robbers were caught and indicted, the venerable Seraphim spoke in their defense. After this assault he remained hunched over for the rest of his life.

Soon after this the Venerable Seraphim began to live the life like a pillar of faith. He spent days on a stone close to his “wilderness” and at night he would go deep into the forest. He would pray almost all the time with his hands lifted up to the sky. This ascetic feat continued for a thousand days.

After a particular vision of the Mother of God closer to the end of his life, the Venerable Seraphim assumed the task of being an elder. He accepted everyone who came seeking his counsel and guidance. Many thousands of people from various walks of life came to see the venerable old man, who enriched them by sharing his spiritual treasures acquired during the many years of serving God. Seraphim met the visitors with humbleness, joy and thoughtful caring. He greeted them saying, “You are my joy!” His advice to many was, “Pray to assume a peaceful spirit, and saved will be many around you.” The elder bowed to the ground, blessed and kissed the hands of every one who came to him. There was no need for the visitors to tell him about themselves, as he already knew what they had in their souls.

He would also say, “Cheerfulness is not a sin. Joy drives away fatigue, and fatigue brings despondency, and there is nothing worse than despondency.” Once he said to a monk, “Oh, if you only could know what joy and what sweetness is granted to the souls of the righteous in heaven, you should agree to bear all misfortunes, persecution and slander with gratitude. If this very cell would be full of maggots eating our flesh during all the days of our life here on earth, we should agree to it gladly with the only purpose of deserving the heavenly joy that our God has prepared for those who love Him.”

One of Seraphim’s close devotees and disciples, Motovilov, described a wonderful event of transfiguration of the great saint. It happened on a cloudy winter evening. Motovilov was sitting on a stump in the forest. Saint Seraphim was squatting in front of his disciple explaining to him the meaning of a Christian life and the aim of us, Christians, living on earth.

Seraphim was saying, “We must let the Holy Spirit into our hearts. Everything good that we are doing for Christ’s sake renders us the Holy Spirit, but most of all it is achieved through a prayer, which is always in our hands.”

“Father,” — Motovilov asked — “how can I witness the grace of the Holy Spirit? How can I know if the Holy Spirit is with me or not?” Saint Seraphim provided examples from lives of Saints and Apostles, but Motovilov still could not grasp the idea. Then the venerable old man took him firmly by the shoulder and said, “We are both in the Holy Spirit now.”

Motovilov felt as if his eyes were opened and he saw that the face of the old man was brighter than the sun. His heart was filled with joy and peace, and his body felt warm like summer; there was a sweet scent in the air around them too.

Motovilov was overwhelmed by this sudden change and particularly by the glowing that was coming from the elder’s face. But Saint Seraphim said to him, “Have no fear, father. You could not have seen me, unless you yourself were now possessed by the Holy Spirit completely. Be grateful to the Lord for His mercy to us.” Then Motovilov understood what it meant when the Holy Spirit descends upon a person and transforms him.

Troparion

Thou didst love Christ from thy youth, O blessed one./ and longing to work for Him alone thou didst struggle in the wilderness with constant prayer and labor./ With pertinent heart and love for Christ thou was favored by the Mother of God./ Wherefore we cry to thee: / save us by thy prayers, O Seraphim our righteous Father.

Righteous Militza

August 1 (July 19 old calendar).

Righteous Militza, queen of Serbia, was a descendant from the ancient clan of Nemaniches. She married a faithful-to-God prince, Lazarius the Serbian, who became the ruler of Serbia in 1379. After her husband died as a martyr in 1389 and before her son Stephan came of age, she ruled Serbia with wisdom, zest and motherly caring for her people; who at the time were oppressed by the Turks. She took care of orphans and widows, restored churches that the Turks destroyed, and built monasteries. She made sultan Bayazet promise not to persecute Christians in her country. In 1393 she took the veil under the name of Eugenia and reposed peacefully in 1405. The relics of the righteous Militza gave off healing myrrh.

The Holy Prophet Elias

August 2 (July 20 old calendar)

A man who saw God, a wonderworker and a zealot for faith in God, St. Elias was of the tribe of Aaron, from the city of Tishba, whence he was known as ‘the Tishbite.’ When Elias was born, his father Sabah saw angels of God around the child, swaddling it with fire and feeding it with flames. This was a foreshadowing of Elias’ fiery character and his God-given fiery powers. He spent his whole youth in prayer and meditation, withdrawing often to the desert to ponder and pray in tranquility. At that time, the Jewish Kingdom was divided into two unequal parts: the Kingdom of Judah consisted only of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with its capital at Jerusa-

lem, while the Kingdom of Israel consisted of the other ten tribes, with its capital at Samaria. The former kingdom was ruled by the descendants of Solomon, and the latter by the descendants of Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon's. The prophet Elias came into the greatest conflict with the Israelite king, Ahab, and his evil wife Jezebel, for they worshipped idols and turned the people from the service of the one, living God. On top of this, Jezebel, being a Syrian, persuaded her husband to build a temple to the Syrian god, Baal, and appointed many priests to the service of this false god. Elias performed many miracles by the power of God: he closed the heavens, that no rain should fall for three years and six months; called down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice to his God, while the priests of Baal were unable to do this; brought rain from the heavens at his prayers; miraculously multiplied corn and oil in the widow's house at Zarephath, and restored her dead son to life; prophesied to Ahab that the dogs would lick up his blood, and to Jezebel that the dogs would devour her — which came to pass; and performed many other miracles and foretold many events. He talked with God on Horeb, and heard His voice in the calm after the great wind. At the time of his death, he took Elisha and appointed him his heir as a prophet; he parted the Jordan with his mantle and was finally borne to heaven in a fiery chariot drawn by fiery horses. He appeared together with Moses, to our Lord Jesus Christ on Tabor. At the end of the world, Elias will appear again, to break the power of antichrist (Rev. 11).

Author's note: In the Greek Lives of the Saints, the following miracle of the holy prophet Elias is recorded: a certain Paisius, abbot of the monastery of St. Elias in Jerusalem, went to Constantinople and from Constantinople to Belgrade at the time that Patriarch Paisius was staying there. At that time, there was an Orthodox Christian living in Belgrade, married to a Latin wife. On the feast of St. Elias, the wife planned to make bread, but her husband said to her, "You must not work." His wife replied that the feast had been two days earlier (according to the Roman Calendar). And so a dispute arose between them. The stubborn woman kneaded the dough, but then a marvel! The dough became stone in her hands! At that, the neighbors gathered round, and each of them took a piece of the stone. Paisius took a piece of it, as a witness to God's miracle, and took it with him to Jerusalem. He laid this piece of stone in front of the icon of the holy prophet Elias in his monastery. (This is recorded in Dositheus Book XII, Ch. 11, Para. 2, p. 1192.)

Troparion, Tone 4

Incarnate Angel and summit of the Prophets,/ second forerunner of the coming of Christ,/ glorious Elijah sent down grace from on high to the Prophet Elisha./ He heals diseases and cleanses the leprous./ He pours healings on all who honor him.

Kontakion, Tone 2

O great Prophet Elijah,/ seer of God's mighty works,/ who didst halt the torrential rain by thy word,/ pray for us to the Lover of Mankind.

Holy Myrrhbearer and Equal-to-the-Apostles Mary Magdalene

August 4 (July 22 old calendar)

One of the myrrh-bearing women, and equal to the apostles, St. Mary was born in Magdala by the Lake of Gennesaret, of the tribe of Issachar. She was tormented by seven evil spirits, of which she was freed and healed by the Lord Jesus. She was a faithful follower and servant of the Lord during His earthly life, and also stood beneath the Cross on Golgotha and lamented bitterly

with the most holy Mother of God. After the Lord's death, she visited His tomb three times; and when He rose again, she saw Him twice, once alone and the other time with the other myrrh-bearing women. She traveled to Rome, went before Tiberias Caesar and presented him with a red egg, greeting him with the words, "Christ is risen!" At the same time, she denounced Pilate to Caesar for his unjust condemnation of the Lord Jesus.

Caesar listened to her, and moved Pilate from Jerusalem to Gaul, where this unjust judge died under imperial displeasure after a terrible illness. After that, she returned from Rome to Ephesus, to St. John the Theologian, whom she helped in his task of preaching the Gospel. With great love for the risen Lord and with great zeal, she proclaimed the holy Gospel as a true apostle of Christ. She died peacefully in Ephesus and was buried, according to tradition, in the same cave in which the seven young men (see August 4th) had been in a charmed sleep for a hundred years. They came to life, and then died. St. Magdalene's relics were then taken to Constantinople. Near the Garden of Gethsemane, there is a beautiful Russian church dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene.

Troparion, Tone 1

O holy Mary Magdalene, thou didst keep Christ's commandments/ and follow Him Who for our sakes was born of a Virgin./ Today we celebrate thy memory/ and receive forgiveness through thy prayers.

Kontakion, Tone 4

When the transcendent God was incarnate/ He received thee as a true disciple in thy great love, O Myrrhbearer./ Then thou thyself didst work many healings/ and art now translated to heaven/ where thou ever intercedest for the world.

Another Kontakion, Tone 3

With others standing before the Savior's Cross,/ weeping and suffering with the Mother of God,/ glorious Mary Magdalene offered praises saying:/ What is this strange wonder?/ He chooses to suffer Who upholds the whole creation!// Glory to Thy Power.

Great Virgin Martyr Christina

August 6 (July 24 old calendar)

Born in the city of Tyre, St. Christina was the daughter of the imperial governor, Urban, an idolater. It is not known why her parents gave her the name Christina, but it carried within itself the mystery of her future following of Christ. She knew nothing of Him until the age of eleven. When she reached that age, her father (because of her beauty, wanted to hide her from the world until she was fully grown) made her live on the top floor of a high tower. He gave her every comfort — slaves and gold and silver idols to which to offer daily sacrifice. But the soul of the young Christina was weighed down and suffocated in this idolatrous atmosphere. Looking out of the window by day at the sun, and by night at the wonderful constellations of shining stars, she came through her natural understanding to a firm belief in the one, living God. God, in His great mercy, seeing her yearning for the truth, sent His angel to her who blessed her with the sign of the Cross, named her the bride of Christ and instructed her fully in the things of God. Then Christina smashed all the idols in her rooms, incurring her father's terrible wrath. He brought her

to trial and had her tortured and thrown into prison, intending that she be beheaded on the following day.

But that night, Urban, in full health, gave up the ghost and went to the grave before his daughter. After that, two of the governors, Dion and Julian, continued the interrogation of this holy maiden. Christina's courage in suffering and the marvels which were performed by the power of God brought many of the pagan inhabitants of Tyre to Christianity. During Christina's torture, Dion suddenly fell dead among the people. His successor, Julian, cut off Christina's breasts and cut out her tongue. The martyr took her tongue in her hand and threw it into Julian's face, and he was instantly blinded. Finally, her sufferings for Christ were ended under a sharp sword, but her life went on in the immortal kingdom of the angels. St. Christina suffered with honor in the third century.

Troparion, Tone 5

Thou didst abandon thy father's error/ and receive divine illumination/ as a glorious virgin betrothed to Christ./ Thou didst bravely struggle/ and destroy the enemy,/ O great Martyr Christina,/ and dost ever pray that we may receive great mercy.

Kontakion, Tone 4

As a shining dove with golden wings thou didst fly to the heights of heaven, O Christina./ We faithfully celebrate thy feast and venerate thy relics/ from which divine healing for souls and bodies flows abundantly to all.

Prince Martyrs Boris and Gleb, The Passionbearers

August 6 (July 24 old calendar)

Princes Boris and Gleb were sons of the Equal-to-the-Apostles prince Vladimir and princess Anna, the Byzantine. Since youth they were noted for their devoutness. According to the scripts we also know that Prince Boris liked church singing very much. Saint Vladimir held them especially dear for their devotion to the holy faith and brotherly love towards each other.

While still alive Prince Vladimir assigned Boris to rule the Rostov province, and Gleb received the Murom principedom. Both Princes worked hard to convert the rough pagans living in those territories into Christians. Saint Gleb is considered to be an educator of the Murom-Riazan region, where from those ancient times up to now he is remembered as the first Christian evangelist and protector of the country.

In the year of 1015 after St. Vladimir's death, his son Sviatopolk (nicknamed "the cursed") seized the power over the great principedom. Being afraid to compete fairly with his pious brothers, he decided to kill them.

At the time St. Boris was deployed with his armed forces on the Alta River. His troops suggested attacking and seizing Kiev, but St. Boris did not want to violate the sacred kinship relations and rejected the proposal with indignation. Sviatopolk informed St. Boris of their father's death, insidiously offered brotherly cooperation, and promised to expand St. Boris' principedom while at the same time sending mercenaries to assassinate him. On the night of July 23rd the mercenaries approached Boris' tent. When they heard psalms sung in the tent, they decided to wait

until Boris fell asleep. Hardly had the saint prince gone to his bed, the murderers broke into the tent and speared him and his slave Georgui, a Hungarian, who tried to protect his master with his own body. The assassins wrapped the martyr who was still breathing into a tent cloth and rode to Sviatopolk. When Sviatopolk learned that Saint Boris was still alive, he sent two Variangians to pierce his heart with swords. The body of Saint Boris was secretly brought to Vyshgorod and buried there in the church of Saint Vasilii.

After killing Saint Boris, Sviatopolk invited Saint Gleb, who at the time was staying near Smolensk, to visit their father who allegedly got seriously ill. The young prince already knowing about Sviatopolk's atrocious deeds was tearfully praying for his father and brother. Horacer, who headed the assassins, ordered the prince's cook, a Turk, to butcher his master. The order was carried out on September 5, 1015.

In 1019, Kiev was conquered by Vladimir's son Jaroslav who ordered that Saint Gleb's body be found and buried next to Boris' grave. Soon the grave was noticed to work wonders. After the church of Saint Vasilii was destroyed by a fire, the bodies of the princes were brought to a new church built in Vishgorod in their honor. When the caskets were opened, metropolitan Ioann and the clergy witnessed a miracle: the bodies of the saints were as white as snow and their faces were shining with holy light, a heavenly incense filled the church and all that were present awed. In 1240, during the Batyi invasion, the bodies of the princes disappeared. Both princes-martyrs are glorified in Russia, beginning from those ancient times. This is testified, among other things, by the great number of monasteries and churches that were built in their honor and came through the ages to our time in many parts of Russia.

Russian people regarded the saint princes-martyrs as their protectors and intercessors. The scripts are full of descriptions of many people wonderfully healed near the relics of the saint princes and of the victories that were won with their help (e.g. the victory of Ruric, son of Rostislav, over Konchak; or the triumph of Alexander-of-the-Neva over the German tribes).

Troparion, Tone 2

O Passion-bearers and fulfillers of the Gospel of Christ,/ chaste Boris and guileless Gleb:/ you did not oppose the attacks of the enemy, your brother,/ when he killed your bodies but could not touch your souls./ Let him therefore mourn while you rejoice with the Angels/ standing before the Holy Trinity./ Pray that those who honor your memory may find grace with God/ and that all Orthodox people may be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 3

Today your memory shines forth, noble sufferers,/ and summons us to glorify Christ our God./ Those who come to the shrine of your relics/ receive healing through your prayers,/ for you are holy physicians.

Saint Olympiada the Deaconess

August 7 (July 25 old calendar)

Olympiada was born in Constantinople (now Istanbul) to very eminent parents. Her father, Anysius Secundus, was a senator and her mother was the daughter of the famous aristocrat Eulavius, who is mentioned in the life of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. When Olympiada was fully

grown, she was betrothed to a nobleman who died before his marriage to this honored maiden. The Emperor and others exhorted her to take another husband, but in vain; she refused them all and devoted herself to a life pleasing to God, giving of her inherited wealth great gifts to the Church and alms to the poor. She served in the Church as a deaconess, first in the time of Patriarch Nectarius and, after his death, under St. John Chrysostom.

When Chrysostom went into exile, he advised Olympiada to remain in the Church as before and serve it, whichever Patriarch should succeed him. But, immediately after the exile of this great hierarch, someone set fire to a large church, and the conflagration took hold of many of the public buildings in the capital. St. John Chrysostom's enemies accused this holy woman of being a malicious fire-raiser. Olympiada was exiled from Constantinople to Nicomedia, where she entered into rest in 408, leaving instructions that her body be placed in a coffin and cast into the sea, and that she be buried wherever the waves threw the coffin up. The coffin was cast up at a place called Vrochthoi, where there was a church dedicated to the Apostle Thomas. Great miracles of healing have been performed through the centuries by her relics.

The exiled Chrysostom wrote beautiful letters to the exiled Olympiada, which to this day serve to give support to all who suffer for God's justice. Among other things, Chrysostom wrote to Olympiada, "Now I am deeply joyful, not only because you have been delivered from sickness, but even more because you are bearing adversities with such fortitude, calling them trifles" — a characteristic of a soul filled with power and abounding in the rich fruits of courage — "You are not only enduring misfortune with fortitude, but are making light of it in a seemingly effortless way, rejoicing and triumphing over it — this is a proof of the greatest wisdom." (Letter 6 of the seventeen that have come down to us.)

Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon

August 9 (July 27 old calendar)

Born in Nicomedia of a Christian mother, Eubula, and a pagan father, Eustorgius, Panteleimon studied medicine as a young man. The priest Hermolaus befriended him, instructed him in the Christian faith and baptized him. Panteleimon miraculously healed a blind man whom other doctors had treated in vain; he healed him by the name of Christ and baptized him. From jealousy, the doctors denounced Panteleimon as a Christian, and he went before the Emperor Maximian for judgment. He stood before the earthly ruler in the body, but in his mind he stood before the heavenly King. He freely declared himself to be a Christian before the Emperor, and, in front of his eyes, healed a paralytic of a long infirmity. This miracle brought many of the pagans to the Christian faith. The Emperor put him to torture, but the Lord appeared to him on several occasions and delivered him whole and uninjured. Then St. Hermolaus suffered along with Hermippus and Hermocrates. Condemned to death, St. Panteleimon knelt in prayer. At that, the executioner gave him a blow on the neck with his sword, and the sword broke as if made of wax. The executioner could not kill him until he had finished his prayer and had himself given the word to behead him. Panteleimon was beheaded under an olive tree, which after that became laden with fruit. "Panteleimon" means "all-merciful." God the all-merciful received his righteous soul, and glorified him among His greatest saints, his relics remaining incorrupt. This wonderful martyr suffered with honor as a youth for Christ on July 27th, 304. St. Panteleimon is invoked in the



prayers at the blessing of water and the blessing of oil, together with St. Hermolaus and the other unmercenaries and wonderworkers. The loveliest church dedicated to him is found on the Holy Mountain.

Troparion, Tone 3

O holy prize-winner and healer Panteleimon,/ intercede with our merciful God/ that He may grant to our souls/ the forgiveness of our sins.

Kontakion, Tone 5

Thou didst faithfully follow the Merciful One/ and wast granted the grace of healing./ O prize-winner and Martyr of Christ our God/ by thine intercessions/ heal the diseases of our souls/ and banish the snares of the enemy/ from those who cry with faith: Save us, O Lord.

The Hieromartyr Valentine

August 12 (July 30 old calendar)

St. Valentine was Bishop in the Italian town of Interamna. He healed the brother of the Roman tribune Frontanus of an illness. When Cherimon, the son of the eminent philosopher Craton, fell ill, Craton, at Frontanus's advice, asked Bishop Valentine to come to Rome. Cherimon was all cramped-up, so that his head was caught between his knees. Valentine shut himself in the room with the sick boy and spent the whole night in prayer. The following day, he brought Cherimon out in full health, and gave him to his father. Then Craton was baptized, with his whole household and those of his pupils. Cherimon left his father's house and went with Valentine. Then Abundius, son of the Roman Eparch, was baptized. Infuriated by this, the Eparch took Valentine and, after torturing him, had him beheaded. Three pupils of Craton: Proclus, Abibus and Apollonius, were beheaded at the same time. Abundius took their bodies and buried them. They all suffered in 273, and became citizens of the heavenly Kingdom.

St. Angelina of Serbia

August 12 (July 30 old calendar).

Saint Angelina was the daughter of the Godly Orthodox Prince of Albania, the brave Scanderbeg. At that time most of the people of Albania were Orthodox Christians who were glorious in their defense of the Faith. At the court of her father who ruled this people the princess Angelina grew up, increasing in the gifts of the Spirit by the help of the Lord God, and her will made strong by the teaching of Christ. The name of her mother is not known, but we can see how she was brought up and what great care her parents gave to the training of her soul in the spirit of the Gospel teaching — and who but her mother would have given so much thought to the growth towards God of her heart and soul?

While she was living thus, growing in stature and the knowledge of the Lord, the young ruler of Serbia, Stephen, came to her father seeking refuge from those of his countrymen who wished to kill him. This Stephen was very gentle and God fearing and some years before had suffered the wrath of the Turkish Sultan who had unjustly punished him with blindness. Comforted

by his clear conscience, Stephen bore his misfortune with a strong heart. Prince Scanderberg received him as a kinsman and before long Stephen felt himself to be a member of the household.

In view of his prolonged exile there and his godly character, it is not surprising that he won the sympathy of Angelina, and not only her sympathy, for their hearts came very close together. So strong was her love that she agreed to share the lot of the young ruler who was not only without a country but also without eyes. Having received the consent of her parents, the young couple received the blessing of the Church in the rite of marriage.

In the years that followed they had two sons, George and John. When they had grown up, the peace of that country was destroyed by the invasion of the Turks who began killing people with no regard to age or sex. Wherefore Stephen, with his wife Angelina and his two sons, fled to Italy where he lived out the remaining portion of his life until his repose in 1468. Angelina was left a widow. In her poverty she turned to the Hungarian ruler for help. He showed mercy and gave them the town of Kupinovo in Sirmie. So in 1486 she came from Italy with her two sons, bearing the incorrupt body of her saintly husband, which she buried there in his Serbian homeland. The two sons also became saints. The first-born, George, gave his title as ruler to his younger brother John and became a monk by the name of Maxim; John was married but had no sons and died in 1503 when he was not yet old. His life was full of good works and it pleased the Lord to glorify him by working miracles through trace bestowed on his relics. Thus, her husband and both of her sons died during Angelina's lifetime. Already old and having drunk the cup of sorrow she took upon herself the "angelic way of life," and followed the rule of prayer as a nun for the salvation of her soul. When her time came she died quietly in the Lord, and was buried in one tomb with her sons in the church of the monastery of Krushedol in Frushka Gora, where to this day there is a service every year in her memory.

Saint Basil, the fool-for-Christ-sake of Moscow

August 15 (August 2 old calendar)

Saint Basil was born in 1464 into a peasant family living in the village of Yelokhovoe near Moscow. When he grew up, his parents sent him to learn shoemaking and before long his master understood that the apprentice was not an ordinary man. Once a merchant came to the shop to order a pair of high boots made for him so that he would not wear them out in a year. Basil said woefully, "We will make them, and you will not wear them out." Several days later the merchant died.

At the age of 16 Basil left his parents for Moscow, where he assumed the ascetic challenge of a fool-for-Christ-sake. Both in summer heat and winter frost he would walk around uncovered and barefooted. Once he overturned a tray of wheat loaves and spilled a jar of kvass. The vendors beat him, and he accepted the abuse with joy and thanked God for it. Later people learned that the loaves were baked with harmful ingredients in the flour and the drink was bad too. It was becoming clear to many people that the fool-for-Christ-sake was a man of God.

Allegorically and through signs, as well as straightforwardly, he foretold misfortunes as punishment for sins and well being as a reward for virtues. Sometimes he would visit taverns to save people from the doom of drunkenness, other times he would direct people to the way of righteousness, talking to them in the streets and plazas. He gave lessons of piety even to the tsar

Ivan the Terrible. Once during the service in church, the tsar was pondering over a better way to ornament his palace on the Vorobiovy Mountains. After the service, Basil reprimanded the tsar for his thoughts wandering from the service to his palace. The tsar confessed the sin and began to respect the fool-for-Christ-sake even more.

Once a merchant started to build a church, but the dome kept collapsing. The fool-for-Christ-sake advised him to go to Kiev saying, "Find the wretched Ioann there. He will give you advice to help you complete the construction." The merchant went to Kiev and found Ioann, who was sitting in a hut and rocking an empty cradle. "Who are you rocking in the cradle?" asked the merchant. "My own mother," said Ioann, "I am trying to repay my eternal debt for her delivering me and bringing me up." The merchant remembered his own mother whom he had driven out of the home and understood why he could not finish building the church.

The fool-for-Christ-sake was happy to help those in need of alms, but he was shy to ask for it. Once he gave away the presents he received from the tsar to a foreign merchant who had been completely broke. He would find a grain of goodness even in the most dejected and sinful people, whom he would help with guidance and comfort. When he was passing by a house where excessive drinking and merry-making was going on, he would embrace the corners of the house and say, "Angels are standing outside this home and grieving over human sins."

People would sometimes deride and beat him up, but he would tolerate everything humbly. Basil spent his nights on a church porch in prayers and meditation. God glorified his righteous servant granting him the gift of discernment and wonderworking. Thus, through Basil's prayers before the Vladimirskaya Icon of Theotokos, Moscow and all of the Russian lands were saved from the invasion of the Crimean khan Makhmet-Guirey in 1521. Having burned the suburbs of Moscow the khan was scared by a vision of a great number of legions and retreated from the territory of the Russian State. In 1547 the fool-for-Christ-sake was crying inconsolably foreseeing the fire of Moscow which destroyed the city almost completely. Some time later at the reception in the palace of the tsar, the fool-for-Christ-sake three times poured some wine out of the window saying that he is putting out a fire in Novgorod. Indeed at that very time there happened a fire in Novgorod, but it did not spread to the entire city because, according to the Novgorod citizens, some unknown person was pouring water over the houses that had caught flames. On arriving to Moscow those Novgorod citizens recognized that person in the fool-for-Christ-sake.

Basil passed away at the age of 88 in 1552. The tsar Ivan the Terrible himself carried the body of the saint into the church to be buried there. Saint Basil was buried in Moscow in the church of the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos that is usually referred to as the Cathedral of St. Basil, fool-for-Christ-sake. His relics are famous for having worked many wonders. The heavy fetters that he had been wearing over his body were kept at the Moscow Theological Academy.

Troparion, Tone 4

Thou didst live a righteous and chaste life, O Basil. For Christ's sake didst thou vanquish thy flesh by fasting, vigil and darkness and sun heat and slush and rainy clouds, and thy countenance has become as bright as the Sun; and now peoples of Russia approach thee, tsars and princes and soldiers among them, and we sing thy repose in Christ. Pray Christ our God for us to be saved from enslavement by enemy and from all civil strife. Pray God to grant us peace and His great mercy to our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 2

Thou didst receive revelation from heaven/ and go forth from the world's turmoil./ Thou didst live a righteous life as a monk,/ and wast given grace to work miracles/ and to heal diseases,/ O wise, blessed and holy Basil.

Saint Nonna

August 18 (August 5 old calendar)

The mother of St. Gregory the Theologian, she was a Christian and a mighty wonderworker through prayer. By her prayers, she brought her husband back from the folly of idolatry to the Christian faith, and he later became bishop of the city of Nazianzus. By her prayers, St. Nonna also saved her son, Gregory the Theologian, from a storm. She entered peacefully into rest as a deaconess in 374.

St. Oswald,

Royal Martyr of Northumbria

August 18 (August 5 old calendar)

Oswald's great devotion and faith in God was made evident by the miracles that took place after his death. For at the place where he was killed fighting for his country against the heathen [Aug. 5, 642], sick men and beasts are healed to this day. Many people took away the very dust from the place where his body fell, and put it in water, from which sick folk who drank it received great benefit. This practice became so popular that, as the earth was gradually removed, a pit was left in which a man could stand. But it is not to be wondered at that the sick received healing at the place of his death; for during his lifetime he never failed to provide for the sick and needy and to give them alms and aid. Many miracles are reported as having occurred at this spot, or by means of the earth taken from it; but I will content myself with two, which I have heard from my elders.

Not long after Oswald's death, a man happened to be riding near the place when his horse suddenly showed signs of distress. It stopped and hung its head, foaming at the mouth, and as its pains increased it collapsed on the ground. The rider dismounted, removed the saddle, and waited to see whether the beast was going to recover or die. At length, having tossed this way and that in great pain for a considerable time, it rolled on to the spot where the great king had died. Immediately the pain ceased, and the horse stopped its wild struggles, then having rolled on its other side, as tired beasts do, it got up fully recovered and began to graze. The traveller, an observant man, concluded that the place where his horse was cured must possess special sanctity, and when he had marked it, he mounted and rode on to the inn where he intended to lodge. On his arrival he found a girl, the niece of the landlord, who had long suffered from paralysis; and when members of the household in his presence were deploring the girl's disease, he began to tell them about the place where his horse had been cured. So they put the girl in to a cart, took her to the place, and laid her down. Once there she fell asleep for a short while; and, on awaking, she found herself restored to health. She asked for water and washed her face; then she tidied her

hair, adjusted her linen headgear, and returned home on foot in perfect health with those who had brought her.”

Martyrs Marinus the Soldier and Asterius the Senator

August 20 (August 7 old calendar)

In the first three centuries, there was an almost constant persecution of Christians. It did happen, however, that some emperors, more benevolent than others, revoked the severe decrees against Christians, but this did not prevent local governors from bringing them to trial — if not directly for their faith, then for insubordination. For example, when a soldier entered the army or received a promotion, he had to take an oath, invoking the names of pagan gods, and sometimes he had to take part in pagan rituals. Christians could not agree to this, and they were given over to punishment for disobedience. There were many such cases under Emperor Gallienus (ruled 260-268), who forbade persecuting Christians for their faith.

In Caesarea of Palestine there was a soldier by the name of Marinus. He was respected by all, even the pagans, for his valor and his noble character. Gallienus' decree had not yet reached Caesarea when Marinus was to be promoted to the rank of centurion in his regiment. As a Christian, he refused to take the pagan oath. Then the commander demanded that he perform a certain pagan ritual. When Marinus refused this, too, the commander threatened him with death. Marinus remained steadfast. “I'll give you three hours to think this over,” said the commander. “Either you agree to the ritual, or face execution.”

As soon as Marinus left the court, he was approached by Bishop Theotekne, who took the soldier by the hand and led him into a nearby church. There, he pointed to a Gospel and to the sword fastened at Marinus' belt. “Choose,” said the bishop, “either the book of life, in which your name will be written as a soldier of the Heavenly King, or the sword, by which you serve an earthly king.”

Without a moment's hesitation, Marinus pointed to the holy Gospel. Then the bishop said to him, “In attaching yourself to God, attach yourself with all your soul, and, strengthened with His might, accept that which you have chosen.”

Marinus began to pray, preparing himself for death. Then, after receiving the bishop's blessing, he left the church. He was immediately seized and taken to trial. There he repeated his confession of faith, and was beheaded with a sword.

It happened that a senator, a Christian by the name of Asterius, was present at the proceedings. As soon as Marinus was executed, Asterius removed his expensive cloak, wrapped in it the martyr's bloodied body and severed head, and took them home in order to give them worthy burial. He, too, was seized and executed.

Translated from *Selected Lives of Saints* compiled by A.N. Bakhmetiev, Moscow, 1872.

In reading the lives of martyrs from the early centuries of Christianity, we are awed and edified, but the stories seem rather remote from us, living as we do in 20th-century America, where freedom of religion is inscribed in our Bill of Rights. But let us consider: in this century, more than 35 million Christians have died for their faith. The overwhelming majority have been in communist or Muslim countries, but we have a recent example here at home. In the shooting rampage at Columbine High School just weeks ago, 17-year-old Cassie Bernall was asked by

one of the teenage gunmen if she believed in God. She hesitated briefly, then answered, “Yes, I believe in God.” And she was shot. What a brave and glorious witness. Here is another teenage martyr. The young Russian Orthodox soldier, Evgeni Rodionov, was a border guard in Chechnya when, in February 1996, at the height of the war, he and three other guards were taken prisoner. Their Muslim captors told the young soldiers that their lives would be spared if they removed their crosses, renounced Christ, and became Muslim. Evgeni refused — and was shot. It was his nineteenth birthday.

Let us learn from the lives of the martyrs, that in the hour of the trial of our faith we may likewise prove to be faithful and courageous soldiers of Christ.

*O faithful, let our prayers be with the martyrs
and we shall participate in their inheritance,
praising and exalting Christ to the ages.
Ode 8, Canon to Martyrs (general).*

Martyr Susanna the Virgin, and others with her

August 24 (August 11 old calendar)

The daughter of Gavinius, a Christian priest in Rome, she was niece to Pope Gaius, and of blood and kin with the reigning Emperor, Diocletian. This Emperor had an adopted son, Maximian Galerius, who wanted to marry Susanna, but she was utterly dedicated to Christ the Lord and had no desire for marriage, especially with an unbaptized man. Susanna brought those who had requested her for the Emperor’s son, the patricians Claudia and Maxima, to the Christian faith with all their households. Infuriated by this, the Emperor issued orders and the executioners took Claudia and Maxima, with their families, to Ostia, where they were burned and their ashes cast into the sea. Susanna was beheaded in Gavinius’ house. The Emperor’s wife, Serena, a secret Christian, took Susanna’s martyred body by night and buried it, and Pope Gaius turned the house where Susanna was killed into a church and held services there. Soon after this bride of Christ suffered, her father Gavinius and Pope Gaius also suffered. They all suffered with honor for the Lord, and received wreaths of glory, in the years 295 and 296.

Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk

August 26 (August 13 old calendar)

Born in 1724 in the village of Korotsk, in the Novgorod region, into a simple, peasant family, he received the monastic habit at the age of thirty-four and very soon, because of his asceticism and spiritual wisdom, was given higher and higher service until he was consecrated Bishop of Voronezh. He served as bishop for a little under seven years and then, because of ill-health, retired to the monastery of Zadonsk and entered into rest there in 1783. His wonderworking relics are kept there to this day. A great ascetic of the Russian Church, he was a rare shepherd, a man of prayer and the writer of beautiful spiritual works. In his wisdom, his holiness and asceticism, he could be counted an equal of the great Fathers of the Orthodox Church of former times. Because of the

many witnessed miracles that were performed over his relics, he was first proclaimed a saint by the people, and then officially by the Church in 1861.

Troparion, Tone 8

From thy youth thou didst love Christ, O blessed one/ and wast a model in word, life, love, spirit, faith and humility./ Now thou art dwelling in the heavenly mansions where thou dost stand before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity./ Holy Father Tikhon, pray that our souls may be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 8

O successor of the Apostles, adornment of Hierarchs and teacher of the Orthodox Church:/ pray to the Lord of all that He grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.

The Martyrs Adrian and his Wife, Natalia

September 8 (August 26 old calendar)

Husband and wife, they were both of noble and wealthy families in Nicomedia. Adrian was the governor of the Praetorium and a pagan, and Natalia was a secret Christian. They were both young, and had lived in wedlock for thirteen months in all before their martyrdom. When the wicked Emperor Maximian visited Nicomedia, he ordered that the Christians be seized and put to torture. There were twenty-three Christians hidden in a cave near the city.

Someone handed them over to the authorities and they were cruelly flogged with leather whips and staves, and thrown into prison. They were then taken from prison and brought before the Praetor for their names to be noted. Adrian looked at these people, tortured but unbowed, peaceful and meek, and he put them under oath to say what they hoped for from their God, that they should undergo such tortures. They spoke to him of the blessedness of the righteous in the Kingdom of God. Hearing this, and again looking at these people, Adrian suddenly turned to the scribe and said, "Write my name along with those of these saints. I also am a Christian." When the Emperor heard this, he asked him, "Have you lost your mind?" Adrian replied, "I haven't lost it, but found it!" Hearing this, Natalia rejoiced greatly, and, when Adrian sat chained with the others in prison, came and ministered to them all. When they flogged her husband and put him to various tortures, she encouraged him to endure to the end.

After long torture and imprisonment, the Emperor ordered that they be taken to the prison anvil, for their arms and legs to be broken by hammers. This was done and Adrian, along with the twenty-three others, breathed his last under the vicious tortures. Natalia took their relics to Constantinople and there buried them. After several days Adrian appeared to her, bathed in light and beauty and calling her to come to God, and she peacefully gave her soul into her Lord's hands.

Troparion, Tone 3

Thou didst value the Faith as imperishable wealth, O thrice-blessed one,/ and didst abandon thy father's ungodliness./ Accepting thy spouse's word, thou wast made radiant in contest./ O glorious Adrian, pray to Christ our God for us,/ together with godly-minded Natalia.

Kontakion, Tone 4

Thou didst lay to heart the words of thy godly-minded spouse,/ O Adrian martyr of Christ./ Eagerly didst thou run to the tortures, and with thy wife receive a crown.

Another Kontakion, Tone 4

The memory of the martyrs has dawned,/ and all the ends of the world are radiant./ They cry out with gladness; O Christ, Thou art the joy of the martyrs.

Saint Alexander Nevsky

September 12 (August 30 old calendar)

He was born on May 30, 1219 at Pereaslavl, a fief of his father, Prince Yaroslav, who was of the house of the Grand Prince of Suzdal. He spent the first years of his life in this small city which stood on the shores of a lake among the trees and meadows and was defended by a simple wooden palisade. His parents, real country nobility, were very devout, they contributed to the adornment of the cathedral and of a monastery established nearby on a hill and they were present at all the divine services celebrated in a small chapel which was connected with their residence by a wooden arcade.

Alexander was scarcely three years old when his father was elected prince of Novgorod and went to live two leagues away from this ever unruly city in order to preside over its fortunes. Here again the role of the Church seems at first to have been predominant. It was in the cathedral of St. Sophia itself that three times a week the council of boyards, the real masters of the free city, met together. But dissension reigned in this strange republic, incessant disputes occurred between the rich merchants and the craft guilds, between the nobles and the prince. As a child, Alexander was present at stormy scenes and at scuffles between citizens and his father's followers. On four occasions he witnessed his father's departure for his fief at Pereaslavl whence he was recalled again at once by his new subjects. At an early age Alexander thus came to know the horrors of internal dissension, the dangers which threatened his country, and became aware of the duties incumbent on its rulers. He developed a profound spiritual life. After mastering the first rudiments of his education he would become absorbed for hours at a time in reading the Old and New Testaments.

At the age of nine he was left alone at Novgorod with his elder brother Theodore, under the guardianship of certain nobles. His father, who had grown disgusted with his office, only returned for short periods and at one time the children themselves were obliged to flee under the leadership of a tutor. Meanwhile, Theodore, the older brother, died prematurely on the eve of his wedding, and when his father, in 1236, became by right of succession Grand Prince of Kiev (that is, ruler of all Russia) to Alexander fell the fief of Novgorod.

The adolescent found himself faced with terrible responsibilities. The following year occurred the great Mongol invasion of the north of Russia and it was only by a miracle that the barbarian hordes were halted before the walls of Novgorod in March 1238 and made their way back to the steppes. Alexander, called on to reign and to fight, henceforth devoted his whole life to the service of the nation; bowing to the divine will he sacrificed himself for the common good. But he did not renounce the world. In 1239 he married the daughter of the Prince of Polotsk, a

feudal neighbor. He enjoyed the pleasure of the chase and hunted bear armed only with a sling. But his duty always took first place with him.

His memorable reign at Novgorod lasted for sixteen long years. Alexander made it his business to combat the separatist tendencies of the city and to strengthen its links with the central power. He endeavored to weaken the economic and political power of the boyards by a direct intervention in the administration of justice, by taking away from the important merchants the right of levying a tribute on furs over an immense region of the north for their own profit and by abolishing other unjustified privileges.

But it was particularly as the defender of the material and spiritual patrimony of the nation that he has rendered his name immortal by his victorious resistance to the Swedes, the Teutonic Knights and the Lithuanians and, subsequently, when he became Grand Prince, by establishing an acceptable *modus vivendi* with the Mongolian overlord.

His first victory over the Swedes, won in 1240 on the banks of the Neva, had world-wide repercussions and earned for him the name of Nevsky with which he is known to history. In order to obtain possession of those parts of Russia which had not fallen under the dominion of the Tartars and to cut the only outlet of Novgorod to the Baltic Sea, King Erik had gathered together a great army and placed it under the command of his son-in-law Birger. The King derived some encouragement for his undertaking from a *Bull* of Pope Gregory IX, addressed in 1237 to the Bishop of Upsala and summoning the Swedes to a crusade against the Finns who had abandoned their Catholic faith under the influence of their neighbors (that is, the Russians). The interpretation of this papal message was clearly somewhat forced, but it appeared to furnish the King of Sweden with some justification for his aggression. Alexander had foreseen the danger. In 1239 he had organized the defense of the routes from Novgorod to the sea and had placed the defense of the routes from Novgorod to the sea and placed his sentries on both sides of the Gulf of Finland. Pelguse, the chieftain of a local tribe, a convert to Christianity, warned him of the disembarkment of the Swedes on the banks of the Neva, and at once the prince hastened to meet them after he first asked the blessing of his Archbishop. Reviewing his troops before he set off he uttered the phrase, an allusion to the Psalms, which has remained famous: "God is not on the side of force, but of the just case, the *pravda*."

Before coming up with the enemy, Alexander's troops had a difficult march before them over marshy land. Pressing on swiftly they arrived on the banks of the Neva which were still shrouded in mist. A few hours earlier at dawn Pelguse had experienced a curious vision. He saw a boat with mysterious shapes on board coming slowly down the river; it was the holy princes-martyrs Boris and Gleb amid their heavenly oarsmen, coming to the help of their "brother Alexander."

Battle was joined at sunrise. It caught the Swedes unaware; they were convinced the Novgorod forces, deprived of the assistance of the Suzdal army, recently destroyed by the Mongols, would be in no position to offer them resistance. Birger was installed in a gold embroidered tent as were many of his knights, but the main body of troops had not yet disembarked. The Russians carried out their attacks with lightning like rapidity while Alexander in person wounded Birger with a blow from a spear, his men at arms cut the bridges joining the boats to the river bank. Panic seized the Swedes and the battle ended with their flight in utter disorder.

Similar scenes occurred in the following year when Alexander inflicted total defeat on the Knights of the Teutonic Order who had acted in concert with the Swedes. They had seized Izborsk, broken the truce of Pskov and burned the outskirts of that city before the boyards opened the gates to them. Having crushed the Swedish offensive, Alexander was ready to go to the aid of

Pskov, but prevented by the boyards from carrying out this plan he withdrew to his father at Pereaslavl. It was not long before he was recalled by his subjects who at last had realized the true extent of the danger. He returned with regiments raised in the territory of Suzdal and set off for the western frontier at the head of all the forces still remaining to Russia after her conquest by the Mongols.

Alexander's fame as a warrior and saviour of his people is best remembered in the Lake Chudskoye battle. The steel clad Teutons driving a wedge through the lines and the Russians retreating on to the ice of the lake and attacking the enemy on two flanks, bringing down hundreds of knights and putting the others to flight. Alexander's victory was complete and the German advance was arrested for centuries. On the 5th of April 1242 the very existence of Russia was saved. Once again those who were present at the battle thought they saw heavenly armies appearing to bring aid to Prince Alexander.

To preserve the integrity of the frontiers of Novgorod it only remained for Alexander to put an end to the invasions of the Lithuanians who in a poorly defended region had for many years past waged a kind of guerrilla warfare. In 1242, as the Lithuanian pressure increased, Alexander destroyed, one after another, seven of their detachments by using in a defensive war his tactics of lightning attack. In 1245, having repulsed a further invasion, he no longer had anything to fear from this quarter. Lithuania gave up annoying her neighbors.

But after 1246, quite new tasks occupied his attention. The second period of his life was beginning; henceforth his eyes were to be turned to the east. His father, the Grand Prince Yaroslav, had just died on his way back from a journey to Karakorum where he had been summoned by the Grand Khan and presumably poisoned, that, at least, is the assertion of the Russian chroniclers. The matter of succession could not be settled without further intervention of the Tartar leaders. For reasons that are unknown to us it is not the deceased prince's oldest son but Alexander who was summoned, together with his brother Andrew, to appear before the Asiatic overlords.

He was faced now with a tragic dilemma. Was the conqueror of the Swedes and the Teutons, was the hero of the Neva and Chudskoye Lake, to adopt the attitude of a humble vassal and to recognize openly the loss of Russian independence, thus insulting the death under torture already suffered by some of his near relations? Alexander, an Orthodox prince, thinking solely of the good of his people preferred to submit to the divine will and took counsel of the higher clergy. Metropolitan Cyril gave his approval to the decision to leave, on the condition that he worshipped no idols and did not deny his faith in Christ.

Collaboration with the tartars was indeed at the moment an historical necessity, the nation could not count on help from outside, the attitude of neighboring countries was entirely hostile and the worth of her own warriors, which was sufficient to confront enemies as courageous as the Swedes or the Teutons in equal numbers, did not amount to much when faced with the hordes of nomads who carried all before them as they advanced by their tens or even hundreds of thousands.

Subsequently, the Russians have been able to recognize the great services that Alexander rendered them by sacrificing his pride on the alter of the fatherland. The Mongols themselves were profoundly impressed by the conduct of a man whose reputation had reached them some time beforehand, they granted him the honors due to his rank and spared him the ordeal by fire and worship of the idols. Nevertheless, they obliged him to undertake the interminable journey to Karakorum through the deserts of Asia and only allowed him to return to his native land after three years' absence. on three occasions during the following years, Alexander had to return to

his master's camp situated to the north of the Azov Sea to arrange current affairs and also to implore their mercy for the people under his government.

His elder brother was dead and his second brother Andrew had taken flight after an attempted rising which ended, as could be foreseen, in terrible reprisals; Alexander had become the Grand Prince of Russia. It was his concern now to prevent further invasions, to inspire the Grand Khan with confidence, to serve as intermediary between him and the Russian people, and to prevent rash insurrections even at the price of painful concessions.

This superhuman task was by no means made easier by fresh attacks from Sweden, against which, in 1258, Alexander was obliged to conduct a new campaign, victorious like the first, and still less by the incessant unrest in Novgorod which, in 1259, assumed an especially serious character when the Tartars were conducting a general census of the population. Only the personal intervention of the Grand Prince who went there at the head of an armed detachment and lavished presents on the tartars, succeeded in preventing terrible bloodshed.

Alexander allowed himself to be discouraged by none of these difficulties. Having established himself at Vladimir, the ancient city of Suzdal, famous for its numerous churches, he re-peopled the villages deserted by their inhabitants, rebuilt the churches and monasteries and reopened the law courts. He arranged a marriage between one of his sons and the daughter of the King of Norway in hope of thus counterbalancing the power of the Swedes. In the solitude of his high position he found a friend and counselor in the person of the Metropolitan Cyril, a great churchman, who was able to understand and advise him; Cyril had seen Kiev and Lavra of Pechersk in ruins; like Alexander, he hoped to spare the nation further misfortune.

In 1242, when the exactions of the Tartars provoked once more a popular rising, Alexander undertook his fourth journey to the Tartar headquarters in order to ward off a punitive expedition. For a whole year he did all in his power to pacify the Great Khan and his henchmen; he even succeeded in dissuading the Tartars from their plan of raising Russian regiments for a war against Persia. But he had come to the end of his strength. On the return journey, over roads made difficult by the autumn rains, he died at a monastery in November 1263. Before his last breath he gave up his princely rank and the glories of this world in order to put on the habit of a monk.

“The sun has set over the land of Suzdal,” exclaimed Metropolitan Cyril in announcing the death of their leader to the dismayed people. Alexander's funeral took place with great solemnity. Legend asserts that when he was placed in the coffin and as the Metropolitan endeavored to place between his fingers the prayer of absolution, according to the custom of the Orthodox Church, the dead man opened his hand and seized the sheet of parchment. Subsequently, numerous miracles occurred at his tomb. He was canonized locally in 1380 and by the whole Russian Church at the Council of 1547. Five centuries after his death, following the victorious outcome of his war against Sweden, Peter the Great transferred the relics of St. Alexander Nevsky to the new capital of St. Petersburg where they lie today at the Lavra that bears his holy name.

It is to St. Alexander Nevsky that the Russian people are wont to address their prayers at times when great misfortunes befall the nation and threaten its existence. Alexander is venerated as a saint without having been a hermit, an ascetic or a martyr. “God has glorified his righteous servant,” writes the chronicler, “because he worked much for the land of Russia and for Orthodox Christianity.”

He entered into rest at the age of forty-three, on November 14th, 1263. The transfer of his relics to the city of Vladimir is commemorated on August 30.

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